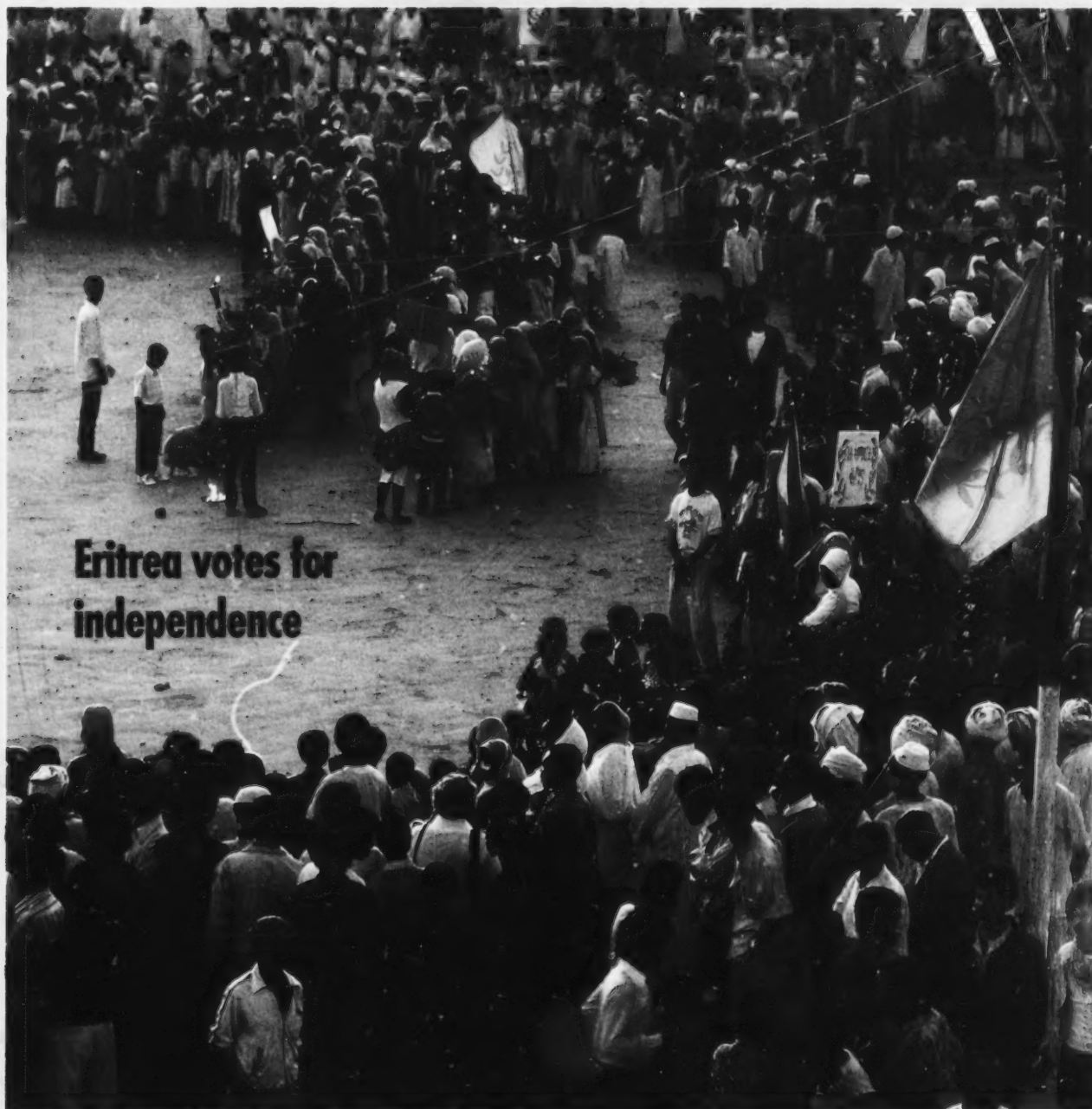




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CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE



**Eritrea votes for
independence**

SEPTEMBER 1993

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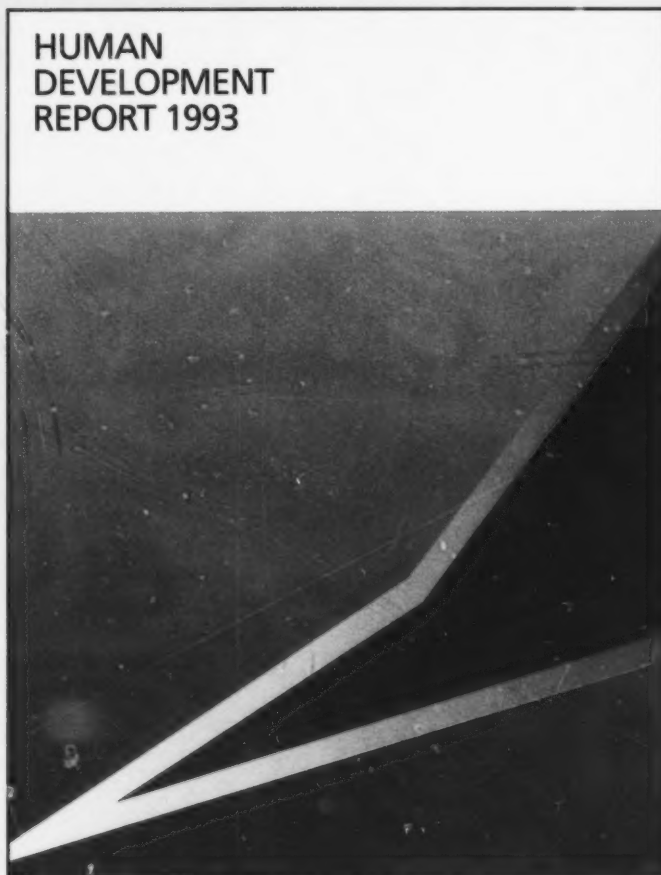
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1993

Who shares? Only ten per cent of the world's people participate fully in the events and processes that shape their lives.

- **Economies** are growing but leaving people behind, which will result in a deficit of a billion jobs by the year 2000.
- **Minorities** get a small piece of the pie, even in the world's richest country. Whites in the USA rank first in human development, while African-Americans and Hispanics rank below some developing countries.
- **Political power** stays in national capitals, particularly in the developing world. On average, less than ten per cent of total national spending in developing countries is delegated to local government, versus 40 per cent in industrial countries.

Who cares? Many people, and for them, the *Human Development Report 1993* lays out the argument for wider participation in economies, politics and civil society. It sets strategies for "people-friendly markets," decentralization of government power and broader support to non-governmental organizations.

The Human Development Report 1993, published by Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Programme, can be ordered through the publishers listed on the back cover of CHOICES.



The cover illustrates the growth of the world economy (top line) and the lagging growth in jobs (bottom line).

CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

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Director: Søren Dyssegaard **Editors:** Lois Jensen, Sid Kane **Contributing Editors:** Paul Boyd, Mary Lynn Hanley
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 Maureen Lynch, Mary Vengrofski, Kristin Mooney **Production:** Mila Feliciano
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Cover photo of Eritrean referendum by Anna Neumann / Agency Anne Hamann, Munich.

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Eritrea's Turn



For Development

BY DAVID ORR

Asmara, Eritrea — The admittance of Eritrea as a member state of the United Nations this September marks the culmination of a process of nationhood that began over a century ago. For the Eritrean people, it is a glorious event that endorses their right to self-determination and confirms international recognition of their sovereign status.

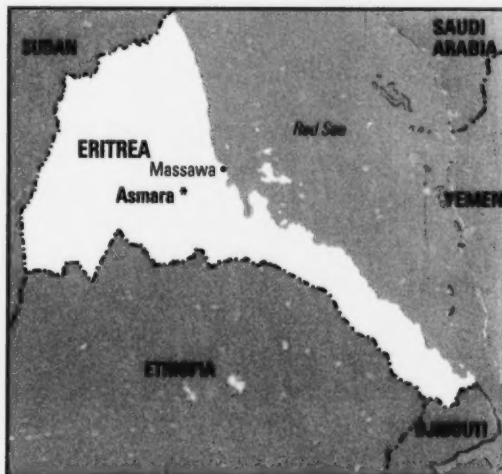
After 30 years
of war and
hard-won
independence,
Eritreans
are pulling
together to
rebuild their
country.

In turn an Italian colony, a British protectorate and a part of Ethiopia, Eritrea came of age in April when an overwhelming 98 per cent of its people voted by referendum in favour of independence. Eritrea formally became a state on 24 May when the country celebrated the second anniversary of its victory over Ethiopia after a 30-year war. The Eritrean flag — red, blue and green with a yellow olive branch — was raised in the capital, Asmara, as people danced in the streets and fireworks lit the night sky.

"The referendum was a significant milestone in the history of this country," says Issaias Afwerki, leader of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), who was elected president by the Front's ruling council before the proclamation of independence. "Our fight has been a long one and we are one of the last nations in Africa to gain freedom. The hope and aspirations of the Eritrean people have always been for independence."

Now Africa's 52nd nation, Eritrea was ruled by Italy from 1890 until Britain defeated the Italians during the Second World War. From 1941 until its UN-sanctioned federation with Ethiopia in 1942, this strategic Red Sea territory was a British protectorate.

The Eritreans launched their war of independence in 1961, a year before Emperor Haile Selassie unilaterally dissolved their parliament and annexed their country. During the cold war, Ethiopia was supported by the United States until 1977 when a newly-installed military junta, the Derg, realigned it with the former Soviet Union. Some US\$10 billion in modern arms were supplied by the



Anna Neumann / Agency Arne Hamann, Munich

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former Soviet Union to Ethiopia, one of the world's poorest countries. But against all odds, including military and numerical inferiority, the EPLF emerged victorious, liberating the territory in May 1991. After the subsequent collapse of the Mengistu regime in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front declared its support for Eritrean demands for self-determination and agreed to proposals for a referendum on Eritrea's future status.

"The EPLF could have declared independence after winning the war against Ethiopia and left it at that," says Michael Askwith, chief of the UN Development Programme's Liaison Office in Eritrea. "Instead, the authorities waited nearly two years to hold a referendum because they wanted to convince the international community they had won not by force alone but by popular will. For Eritreans, the referendum was a way of legitimizing their independence in the eyes of the world."

The referendum was held over a three-day period, from 23-25 April, to allow voters in the remote highlands time to reach one of the 1,500 polling booths spread across the country's 10 provinces. Eritrea's population is estimated at about 3.5 million. About 1.2 million voted, with almost a third of the ballots cast by citizens living outside the country.

The UN observer mission (UNOVER) that oversaw the referendum process, employed UN personnel, members of international and regional institutions, foreign government representatives, academics and aid workers from around the world.

As part of the UNOVER mission, UNDP provided support to the Referendum Commission by helping to raise roughly \$1.7 million in cost-sharing funds from bilateral donors, to complement its own contribution of \$300,000. The funds were used for training of electoral workers, transport for voters and election personnel, voting booths and overall coordination of the historic event.

For much of the international community, sub-Saharan Africa has become a byword for all sorts of calamity: war, famine, drought, to say nothing of AIDS and crippling foreign

debt burdens. But at last the continent has produced a good-luck story — Eritrea — or so believe the UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based there. It is now hoped that international donors and foreign investors will prove equally committed to the country's future. By the time of the referendum the World Bank had assisted in mobilizing a group of donors to commit about \$155 million in support of the Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme of Eritrea.

Eritreans are doing their best to overcome the suffering and destruction caused by the conflict. They have yet to acquire the multi-party democracy to which the EPLF says it is committed. And there are pressing social and economic problems that need to be addressed. For the moment, however, they are enjoying a honeymoon period. Anyone visiting Eritrea last spring could not have failed to be captivated by its vibrancy.

The mood of its Italianate capital was buoyant and celebratory. Everywhere in Asmara, fine colonial and art deco buildings were being refurbished and redecorated. The stalls of the Muslim quarter's bustling marketplace were piled high with fresh produce. Along palm-lined Liberation Avenue and in the streets behind the Catholic cathedral, café society sipped cappuccino. Families indulged the local passion for portraits taken in the city's ubiquitous photo studios. The roads were busy with tiny, 30-year-old Fiats.

"Eritrea is a special place," says Mr. Askwith. "The people have amazing commitment and initiative, together with a tremendous capacity for self-sacrifice. They have a lot of reconstruction to do and they know it. They are prepared to accept outside help but are determined ultimately to stand on their own feet."

The Government of Eritrea has estimated that \$2 billion is needed just to repair the war damage and to return Eritrea

back to its 1950s status as one of Africa's most industrialized countries. To facilitate this huge task, UNDP is spearheading an ambitious country programme which aims to bring together all the relevant UN agencies to promote coordinated support for Eritrea's national development plan. This new UN system country strategy constitutes one of the first exam-

"For Eritreans, the referendum was a way of legitimizing their independence in the eyes of the world."



Anna Neumann / Agency Anne Hamann, Munich

Casting a ballot in Asmara.

ples of an approach recommended in the December 1992 General Assembly resolution on UN operational activities worldwide. UNDP alone has earmarked \$6 million to help in the rebuilding process, which will involve reconstructing the country's infrastructure, rehabilitating industry, retraining and resettling demobilized troops and revitalizing social services such as health and education.

It is hoped that over the next five years, additional funding of between \$50 million and \$200 million will be forthcoming from donors, particularly if the UN system meets its targets for refugee repatriation. Presently, an estimated 450,000 Eritrean refugees are still in the Sudan.

Arriving in Asmara, a city of 400,000, it is hard to believe that this country has only recently emerged from years of chronic famine and the longest civil war in the history of the continent. People are fashionably dressed, the streets are clean and the parks well-tended, and a variety of merchandise fills the

stores. The mail system had not started up by the time of the referendum but it was possible to make long-distance calls. Hot water was available in homes and hotels and there was no problem with electricity supply.

Beneath the impressive veneer of its capital, however, are shocking reminders of a long and terrible war. Everywhere around the country lie the discarded hulks of destruction. In Asmara, a "Graveyard of the Tanks" stands as a sad monument of rusting military hardware. And at Dekemhare, south-east of the capital, and along the main road going west, corpses of Ethiopian soldiers lay unburied two years after the end of hostilities.

Nearly every Eritrean family lost a member in the conflict. Some 100,000 "martyrs," including 65,000 EPLF fighters, are believed to have died in the struggle. Tens of thousands of children were orphaned and many civilians and fighters suffered disabilities. In every town and village they are visible, young men and women on crutches or in wheelchairs.



David Orr

Workers construct a reservoir to collect rainwater.

Some 85,000 ex-fighters are now engaged in reconstruction projects and billeted in military bases and encampments around the country. They receive 60 birr (\$12) per month (90 birr or \$18 per month for the disabled). There are plans to demobilize up to 50,000 of the former soldiers, but organizing training and providing employment presents huge problems.

The biggest camp is Denden in Asmara, a former US military base. Among the thousands of men and women living there are nearly 300 severely disabled fighters.

Meaza Haile, 27, comes from the rural province of Hamasien. Only 15 when she joined the EPLF, she went to the front after five months of training. She was running towards enemy positions near Nakfa one day in 1987 when she stepped on a land-mine, losing both her legs below the knee.

Ms. Haile's fortitude is typical of the selfless—and somewhat daunting—equanimity displayed by the disabled ex-fighters. "I am proud of my injury," she says. "I have no bad feelings. I was injured for the nation and the people. I was ready to give my life."

Ms. Haile, who is learning English, mathematics and science, hopes to progress before long to the study of radio maintenance at a technical college. She and other disabled women combatants do basketball in their spare time.

Mulugeta Asgodome is a 27-year-old who was also injured on the Nakfa front. He joined the EPLF at 14, attending school

until he took up a gun four years later. A bullet through his spine in 1984 left him paralysed from the chest down. He is learning to be an electrician and plays the guitar for relaxation. A fellow musician, Habtemichael Ogbazghi, paralysed in an air raid at the age of 18, is training to be a computer operator at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Eritreans, understandably proud of the sacrifices made by those who fought, contribute to a fund for the disabled and in the future will pay a percentage of their salary to help provide for their welfare and future needs.

Another serious social problem is posed by the refugees. Only 80,000 have returned since liberation, and many are still housed in temporary shelters. One recent returnee is Neghsti Ghebreisus who spent seven years in a camp in eastern Sudan. She left home with her husband at the age of 13.

"It's good to be home," she says, now back in Deki Shehai in Hamasien Province. "The village looks a bit different but it's wonderful to see people living peacefully. Life in Sudan was very hard and we didn't have enough to eat."

Asli Afewerki also left Deki Shehai after its occupation by the Ethiopian Army in 1978. "I've come back here to be with my family and to find my husband," she says. "I haven't seen him yet. He's in the EPLF and I don't know whether he'll remain a soldier or if we'll be able to go back to farming. The problem here is that there's a shortage of land."

The first refugees fled to Sudan in 1967 and they continued to leave in waves throughout the war. Most were peasants. "Our priority is to get these people in Sudan back home, to resettle and reintegrate them," explains Ahmed Tahir Baduri, head of the Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs. "But you can't just bring these people back and dump them. The ground has to be prepared first."

By the time of the referendum, UNDP and the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) had assumed the job of coordinating the work of all UN agencies in a three-year repatriation programme that is estimated to cost \$340 million. The target is to bring back 150,000 people a year, starting this September.

As a first step, DHA and UNDP have assisted in organizing consultations among donors, NGOs and national authorities in preparation for a needs assessment and funding appeal. "This is a prime example of UNDP's coordinating role in Eritrea," says Mr. Askwith. "We've learned a lot from the experience of repatriating refugees in Central America and we're applying that knowledge here."

The greatest challenge facing Eritrea, however, is the rebuilding of its economy after three decades of war. The country's estimated annual per capita income of \$115 is among the world's lowest.

"Our policy is the promotion of a free market economy," explains Mr. Afwerki. "But we have to undo a 17-year-old process of nationalization and dismantle those institutions created by the Mengistu regime. Everything is still in the public sector, but we want to introduce reforms quickly."

The 40 public sector factories that were standing idle in May 1991 — including textile, footwear, beverage and other light industry plants — are all working, though at one-third capacity.

The agricultural sector, which sustains 90 per cent of the population, has also been devastated. Though never self-sufficient in staple foods, Eritrea once produced enough fruit and vegetables for export. Many of these

crops grew on the extraordinary network of mountain terraces outside Asmara which are now overgrown with prickly pear cacti. Eighty per cent of the country now relies on food aid.

"The rains we had last year were the best in 30 years," says Musie Tesfason, headman of Addi Konsti, a farming community of 1,800 in Hamasien Province. "But we only have 100 oxen so we couldn't plough most of the land. We eat everything we grow and still people go hungry."

Hamasien is home to a harsh mountain plateau landscape of dusty soil, jagged rocks and huge candelabra-shaped cacti. To scratch a living from this earth is difficult in the best of times. But to do so without enough draft animals and without the necessary seeds and tools is almost impossible. Soil erosion is a major scourge.

However, spurred on by a new agricultural rehabilitation programme, supported by Oxfam and other aid agencies, people are trying to draw the most out of the land. Just outside Addi Yacob, a village of 800, a 500-strong voluntary labour force recently constructed a reservoir to collect rainwater for horticultural use as well as for human and animal consumption. Dotted around the surrounding hills are tree-planting and market gardening schemes.

The Italian funding and expertise which once sustained the country's light industry is again starting to trickle in, along with investment from a number of other countries, mostly European. By early this year, Asmara's upscale hotels were filling up with foreign businessmen eager to claim a stake in the Eritrean reconstruction effort.

"It's not going to be easy, and we don't underestimate the difficulties," says Eritrean contractor Goitom Tesfai, who recently returned from England. "But we are a hard-working people and those of us who have done well abroad will invest our money in the country's future. Nearly all Eritreans working abroad sent remittances back home during the war and continue to do so."

Recovery will be a long process, requiring the mobili-

"Eritreans are prepared to accept outside help but are determined ultimately to stand on their own feet."

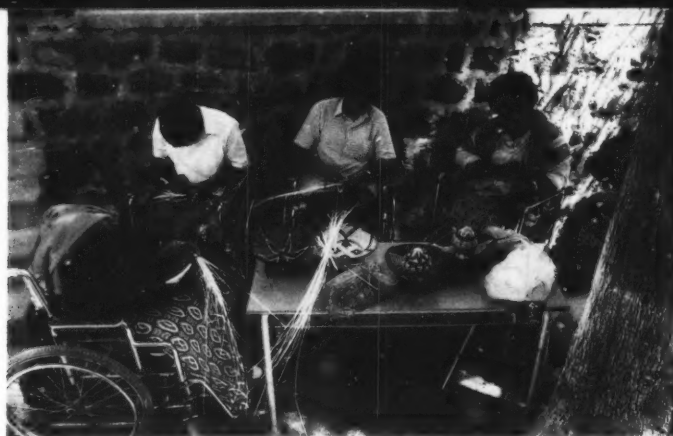
zation of huge resources and repairing of a shattered infrastructure. In the 1950s, the territory had 735 miles of asphalt roads, and a 220-mile railway system linking the capital with the Massawa port and the western towns of Agordat and Barentu. There were some 5,000 commercial and industrial firms. Most towns had water and electricity.

Now the roads are in patchy condition, the railway tracks have been torn up and Massawa lies in ruins. This historic Turkish-Egyptian city was all but completely destroyed by Ethiopian shelling after its liberation by the EPLF in February 1990. Its industrial area is silent, the salt flats largely untended and its port, the largest natural deep-water harbour on the Red Sea, eerily empty of traffic.

Yet Massawa is regarded as a linchpin in Eritrea's economic recovery process, mainly because the city is strategically located for the exploitation of the country's greatest natural resource: fish. Mindful of the marine industry's huge capacity for development, UNDP is backing a \$5 million initiative, the Semhar fisheries rehabilitation project, in cooperation with the UN Capital Development Fund (see opposite page).

Eritrea's spirited emergence into nationhood is tempered by the sobering realities of destruction and decay suffered over the past decades. A whole generation has been blighted; those who have survived have lost out on their youth and years of learning. But virtues have been wrested from this tragedy.

Rather than channelling all its energies into guerilla warfare, the EPLF, with an eye to the future, emphasized the importance of organization and training. Well educated and with a range of professional expertise among its ranks, the EPLF leadership set up an alternative administration in



Disabled women fighters learn basketry in Denden.

David Orr

the rebel-held areas during the war. Young fighters received schooling, and a medical corps of astounding competence was developed.

Eritrean women, for years an underclass with little access to education and no right to property, achieved their emancipation by fighting alongside men during the war (women made up about one third of the EPLF's fighting force). Eritrean women must be counted among the most liberated in all of Africa, though whether they will be able to consolidate in peacetime the advances made in war is debatable.

Former women fighters like Hiwet Goitome, Lemlem Gebrewold, Abeba Turru and Selamawit Tesfahungein are eager to capitalize on their wartime specialities and learn new skills. Students in one English language group are performing or training for jobs that in many African countries would be the preserve of men: administrator, computer operator, journalist or librarian.

For the moment, the outlook in Eritrea is bright and there is optimism in the air. But there is no getting around the country's problems, particularly its economic weakness. Right now, everyone – or nearly everyone – is poor together. But as time progresses and some grow rich faster than others, cracks may start to appear in an apparently strong social edifice.

A people of nine different languages and two major religions – Christianity and Islam – the Eritreans have shown themselves to be united and resourceful in the face of adversity. The next major step will be the drafting of a constitution and the holding of elections. All signs indicate that, with its newfound independence, Eritrea will forge ahead. ■

David Orr is a London-based journalist who reports frequently on Africa.

Eritrean women, for years an underclass with little access to education and no right to property, achieved their emancipation by fighting alongside men during the war.

Harvesting the Sea

Hadiise Brehu and Abude Gebreselase came down from the Eritrean highlands to the coast a year ago to look for work they could not find in their villages. Both in their early 20s and from large farming families, they found a new trade on a small fishing craft operating out of Massawa.

"It's a good life, and if we can start making more money we'd like to stick to it," says Mr. Gebreselase. "Perhaps one day we'll even have our own boats. Of course, it's difficult with things here so smashed up, but we've heard there'll be improvements at the port and that's good news."

A \$5 million fisheries project, backed by UNDP and the UN Capital Development Fund, promises greater productivity for Mr. Brehu and his colleague. The five-year undertaking aims to restore Eritrea's fishing capabilities up to and beyond those of its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s.

There is much work to be done. During the war, fishermen were unable to maintain their boats and gear, infrastructure and markets were run down, and many fishermen migrated to foreign shores. The final blow was dealt by Ethiopian bombing raids on Massawa and on neighbouring fishing communities. A third of Massawa's original fishing fleet is now derelict. Facilities at the port are in a terrible state.

In April, work began with the aim of converting Geibe port into a proper harbour with a good fish-landing pier. An auction shed, ice plant, offices and fishermen's housing are to be built. A small

fish-landing stage is to be turned into a workshop for the repair of boats, engines and nets. A fish-collection centre is also to be constructed at Dahlak Island where most of the 620 local fishermen live.

"We have decided to make fisheries a priority," says Saleh Meky, secretary of

The fish market in Asmara has to be upgraded and two new outlets will be built. On top of that, good marketing strategies must be devised.

"Eritreans, apart from those living on the coast, are not natural fish eaters," explains project manager Sei Itoh of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. "Most people don't even know how to cook fish, so a major information campaign is to be launched later this year."

Whereas the world's annual per capita fish consumption stands at 14 kilos, Eritrean per capita consumption is estimated at only 170 grams. Saleh Meky and Sei Itoh hope that figure can be raised to one or two kilos over the next five years.

Out of a total coastal catch of 4,000 tonnes a year, about 75 per cent is currently being sold in Yemen. A five-year target of 6,000 tonnes annually has been set. If a third of that catch is exported to Yemen, there will still be 4,000 tonnes for consumption in Eritrea and for export to other countries. Over that period, it is also hoped that many of the 250 fishing craft plying the coastline can be replaced with modern vessels.

As they look out over the calm, aquamarine waters of the Red Sea from their Massawa office, Saleh Meky and Sei Itoh are confident that a bountiful harvest can soon be reaped. — D.O.



Geibe port in Massawa.

the Department of Marine Resources and Inland Fisheries. "We have to feed our people and the Red Sea has a major role to play. Unlike the land, the marine environment has not been downgraded by the war. In fact, it is virgin territory," he says. "We have the resources. All we need is the money and equipment to get started."

In addition to major construction work at Massawa, an effective distribution system with cold-link transport and refrigerated storage facilities must be established.

David Orr

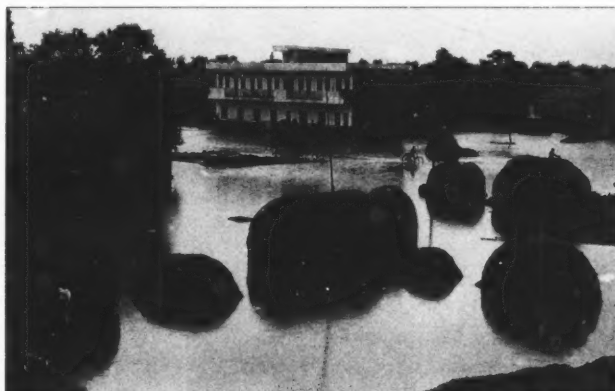
AFTER THE FLOOD

At a time of increasing demands on the United Nations in responding to conflicts and natural catastrophes, the UN Development Programme in China has sought new ways to help flooded communities recover from disaster and prepare for the next.

BY KEN KEOBKE

Beijing — Throughout history, cultures have shared myths of the end of the world by flood. There is little wonder; the devastation of a flood is so final, so complete, that before people had begun recording the horror in history books, they passed the fear and lessons of the great floods on to their children through art, song and stories.

But now, new chapters and new endings to these stories are being written. The past two years have brought a series of events remarkable for the United Nations, China, and various donor countries. In 1991, Anhui and 17 other areas and provinces in China were struck by a series of natural disasters, with Anhui particularly hard hit by a hundred days of flooding followed by a hundred days of drought. The lives of millions of Chinese were seriously disrupted, both in the countryside and urban areas. The ensuing response of the Chinese government and the United Nations was immediate and unprecedented. Within two weeks of the Chinese government's



Floodwaters cover farmland and wheat stacks in Anhui Province.

appeal for assistance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) had mobilized more than US\$7 million from 14 donor countries and aid agencies, enabling relief and rehabilitation operations to start. In the months that followed, an additional \$10 million was raised. Donors included Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

structure that once stood, more is required than just rebuilding of schools and hospitals," said a UNDP official in Beijing following the crisis. "We needed to give local governments the techniques and resources to promote recovery and to be better prepared for the next disaster."

The fact that this was the first time China had ever appealed for international disaster assistance added to the stature and importance of the UN's response, which, along with UNDP and UNDRO, involved the United Nations

UNDP and the Chinese government agreed on a comprehensive approach to recovery. It encompassed immediate relief, but also long-term risk reduction and the establishment of emergency management information systems — focusing on the hard-hit provinces of Anhui and Jiangsu. "In a situation where the income levels of tens of millions of people have been reduced to the equivalent of \$20 a year, where billions of dollars are needed to recreate every



Residents of Wuxi City wade through floodwaters.

Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. But to better understand what was required by the recovery effort, it is first necessary to consider the geography and history of places that were hardest hit.

Looking over a map of Anhui Province, one sees a delicate blue lace of rivers strung with hundreds of lakes. Descending in an arc by plane over its capital of Hefei, one sees this lace stretched over a tapestry woven with every shade of green: wheat in the north of the province, rice in the south, and tea across the mountains. Anhui is among the most densely populated of Chinese provinces, and the people who live here rely desperately on the strength of their harvests.

The terrible truth of this has been rediscovered several times this century when floods wiped out crops and food supplies. In 1954, 30,000 people in China lost their lives. In 1931 an estimated 890,000 people drowned, starved, or died of illnesses that spread due to malnutrition and to the destruction of clean water supplies.

Although the flooding in 1991 was the worst in 100 years, immediate intervention resulted in minimal loss of life. Fang Gongpu, a 70-year-old watchman at a UNDP-supported flood rehabilitation project in Anhui, recalls: "I have two sons, both farmers, and when the rains came in 1991 they built dykes to protect our home. But the dykes broke and everything was ruined. We lost all our furniture, all our grain. The rains were worse than in 1954. But this time

we have been able to find work and to buy the things we need."

The creation of employment opportunities involving the rehabilitation of Anhui's hardest-hit communities is a key element of a recovery programme that has helped people like Fang Gongpu rebuild their lives. And this difference is a radical change from the usual irony of disasters: when a flood brings ruin to a rural community, peasants often lack not only the resources to make their land productive again, but the chance to earn money necessary to replace what they have lost. Soon, a cycle of poverty and debt sets in that consumes their savings, the remains of their farms and their hope. The Chinese government, working with UNDP, has sought to change this by creating em-

ployment opportunities for local villagers. To date, residents of Anhui have helped rebuild 47 schools and 28 clinics and hospitals; another 30 schools and hospitals are also being built across Jiangsu and Anhui Province.

Activities focused first on relief and later on rehabilitation. The recovery programme has also made possible longer-term training in disaster management and flood prevention, as well as new construction techniques. Setsuko Yamazaki, assistant UNDP resident representative in Beijing, explains: "Future flooding in this area is almost unavoidable, so we tried to find ways that damage could be lessened. An important element of our plan was to involve people at the grassroots, while also improving the skills of county and provincial officials to help them cope with future disasters."

When the floods first came, Anhui's Quanjiao County was among the places worst hit. Even in the town's higher streets, walls bear marks of where torrents of water rose, sometimes as high as five metres. Li Zonglie, the county magistrate, recounts the terror along with the statistics: "Rains in excess of three times the average fell and soil-laden waters burst over the banks of the Chu and 22 other rivers which run through the county. Large areas of farmland were inundated, ruining 60 per cent of the wheat crop, and 80 per cent of the rape seed plants. Three-quarters of all urban

areas were flooded, while roads, railways, communications systems, electricity networks and drinking water supplies were left in shambles," Mr. Li explains.

More than 43,000 homes were damaged and an additional 18,000 were completely levelled. Hundreds of schools and factories were also destroyed. The threat of epidemics was particularly frightening because 69 township and village medical clinics were badly damaged.

"The first thing we did," says Mr. Li, "was to send out roving medical teams and emergency supplies. And after the waves began to subside, we began working with UNDP to rebuild and rehabilitate the county."



Ken Keobke / UNDP

Villagers help reconstruct the Shucheng County school in Anhui Province.

Shen Yulong, a local government official, had been on a training course in Canada when the floods began. With feelings of helplessness, he watched the televised images of the destruction of places he knew so well.

"Within six days of coming back I started work with Anhui's Provincial Leading Group, a disaster management team. Rehabilitation activities began with week-long workshops sponsored by UNDP that focused on construction techniques, disaster management training and development of rural industries. These were attended by some 50 local leaders, all experts in their fields.

"Once the needs of each county were assessed, UNDP experts helped us decide on specific local projects," Mr. Shen explains. "New designs and approaches were settled upon that required buildings to be situated in less vulnerable locations, and built of flood-resistant materials."

In Anhui's Quanjiao County, UNDP supported the construction of the Guandu Township Clinic, where Chang Xianping, a local resident, was among the 40 workers. Like many others, Mr. Chang is a farmer who struggled with useless dykes and then watched as floodwaters rose and flowed a metre high through his rural home. Like others, he lost most of his possessions, including food supplies and all of his livestock. His 1.5 hectares of rice fields

Although the flooding in 1991 was the worst in 100 years, immediate intervention resulted in minimal loss of life.

were completely destroyed. "I lived in a temporary shelter for a month weaving bamboo mats to reinforce the dykes. Afterwards, I worked to scrape the mud and sand from my home. Then I came here and found work as a labourer."

The precious income from the construction project is now allowing Mr. Chang to regain some semblance of his former life. He still plants and harvests his fields, but the rest of the time he joins other farmers in building the township's new clinic.

Xia Jihe, a master mason and Mr. Chang's foreman, explains how this and other new buildings will withstand future flooding. "We usually mix concrete by hand, but UNDP helped us buy a mechanical mixer which makes for finer, far stronger materials. In the workshops we met construction experts from abroad who improved our techniques. For example, we no longer mix concrete when the temperature is below freezing because it's not as strong. Also, the site of the new clinic has been moved to higher ground and the foundation of the building is double the usual height."

Mr. Xia says that all the new clinics will be at least two storeys. "In the last flood, so many machines were lost," he says. "New X-ray machines and other necessary medical equipment will be safer on the second floor."

For the same reason, a school under construction in Shucheng County is rising to three storeys. The county magistrate, Shu Yongcheng, points to the watermarks along the walls of the old



one-storey school. "The water came up and through the windows. Some of the desks we can repair, some we cannot. But the books, the papers are gone, the science and athletic equipment ruined. There was no safe place to put it all."

Many of the county's 1,800 teachers, who live in simple quarters adjoining their school, suffered serious damage to their homes, which were constructed of traditional sun-baked mud and straw bricks. Since rehabilitation work began, all new construction must meet strict guidelines concerning location, and cement brick is now the designated building material. As part of the reconstruction effort in Shucheng and in other areas, thousands of university and technical students were mobilized to help select sites, design new homes, and educate villagers reluctant to leave the land of their ancestors to rebuild on higher ground.

In Shucheng, the devastation was particularly dramatic. Floods broke through five key dams and dykes. Within days, 18 of the county's 30 townships had become a single lake, displacing 200,000 people. Mountain floods cov-

ered over 3,200 hectares of farmland with sand and stone — much of which cannot be reclaimed. The government in this country is therefore giving priority to promoting new forms of employment, including the start up of small cottage industries.

Three to five years are likely to pass before Anhui fully recovers. And while rehabilitation efforts and long-term planning are both in place, more international support and assistance are needed, especially since more floods may come.

Many lessons were learned during the hundred days of flooding and the hundred days of drought. But will they be remembered? Songs have been written, heroes praised and on the one-year anniversary of the disaster, a play called "The Flood" opened in Beijing's Children's Theatre. In the play, a cast of villagers, surrounded by sandbags, huddles beneath a tarpaulin, finding shelter from the rain and rising waters. They have all had personal tragedies and conflicts with each other, but in the course of an evening, these sorrows are healed and the problems overcome. The final message of the play: "We can all survive if we help one another." ■

Ken Keobke, a Canadian writer and teacher, is based in Hong Kong.

Floods broke through five key dams and dykes. Within days, 18 of Shucheng County's 30 townships had become a single lake.



CITIES OF MEMORY

Of the 81 historic urban centres and towns that have been designated World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, 46 are located in developing countries. Recognized for their historic value or outstanding artistic achievement, these sites are considered of such importance to humanity that their loss would be irreparable.

Besides the immediate challenge of restoring crumbling foundations and ornate facades, officials in historic cities in the developing world must deal with the stresses brought on by rapid urbanization. Many of these ancient towns, some still enclosed by massive walls, are now surrounded by burgeoning metropolises. And though they have survived for centuries, historic cities today must confront the myriad problems that other cities face — in addition to the protection of their cultural heritage — or risk disappearing altogether.

Restoring and maintaining these unique urban centres means treating them not as static monuments to the past, but as dynamic, living entities that can serve as models in an otherwise daunting urban future. It is actions taken now — by developing country governments aided by international organizations such as UNDP — that will largely determine what that future will hold.

Abject poverty murmurs along the staircase where the rats run, and through the dirty rooms," writes Jorge Amado in a description of his native town, Salvador de Bahia in Brazil. "These mansions were once the homes of sugar barons. Now they are the most squalid tenement houses in the world."

From the historic heart of Salvador de Bahia to the old city centres of the world's largest metropolises — Mexico City and Cairo — a now familiar pattern has settled in. As government offices, businesses and long-time residents relocate to more spacious and modern quarters, old city centres become magnets for the poor and rural migrants in search of work. Deteriorating housing, collapsing infrastructure, environmental pollution and serious social problems are often the result.

International action to help reverse this downward spiral and to preserve these historic sites began in the late 1970s and 1980s, when elaborate fund-raising campaigns were launched by UNESCO. In many instances, important monuments were saved. But overall success has been scattered and uneven at best. A 10-year campaign launched in 1980 to safeguard the old city of Fez, Morocco, for example, raised only a tiny fraction of the US\$540 million required.

Due to modern-day urban pressures, the approach towards rehabilitation in many of these historic centres is changing. Today, instead of isolated actions, work





Left to right: Quito / UNDP, Marrakech / UNDP, Cairo / UNDP, Istanbul / SIPA, Istanbul / Black Star, Krakow / Black Star

on preserving historic landmarks and other cultural heritage fits in with efforts to improve the wider urban area.

"What is the point of restoring a church or a mosque or other historical monument when the city around it is falling apart?" says Sylvio Mutal, who has directed rehabilitation work in at least 10 historic cities in Latin America and the Caribbean through UNDP.

This integrated approach means dealing with such issues as the cities' management and revenue-generation, the laws that regulate their growth, housing, infrastructure and the economic opportunities available to their residents.

In Fez, for example, after the preservation campaign came to a standstill in 1988, an interdisciplinary group led by the Moroccan government and UNDP, and including representatives from the World Bank, the UN Centre for Human Settlements and UNESCO, met to revive and redirect it. A realistic plan resulted, which includes not only safeguarding of historic monuments, but actions to ensure that Fez remains a viable urban centre for decades to come.

The importance of cities in the development scenario of the coming decades is difficult to ignore. According to the World Bank, close to half of the world's population will live in urban areas by the year 2000. Ninety per cent of the poor in Latin America, 40 per cent of the poor in Africa

and 45 per cent of those living in poverty in Asia will be urban dwellers. Some experts say the experience gained in historic cities can provide useful lessons in making urban life more livable.

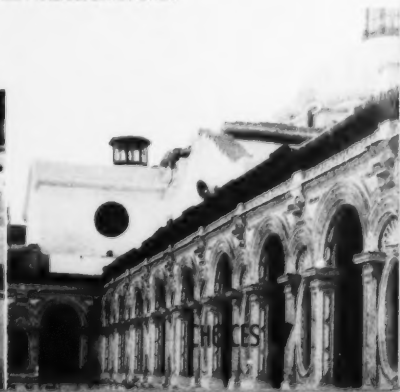
"There is a nostalgia associated with historic cities that generates interest and excitement in them," says Mr. Mutal. "But they can also be used as 'laboratories.' Unlike many of our modern, more anonymous metropolises, they have a human scale and a certain physical and social fabric that allows development to take hold."

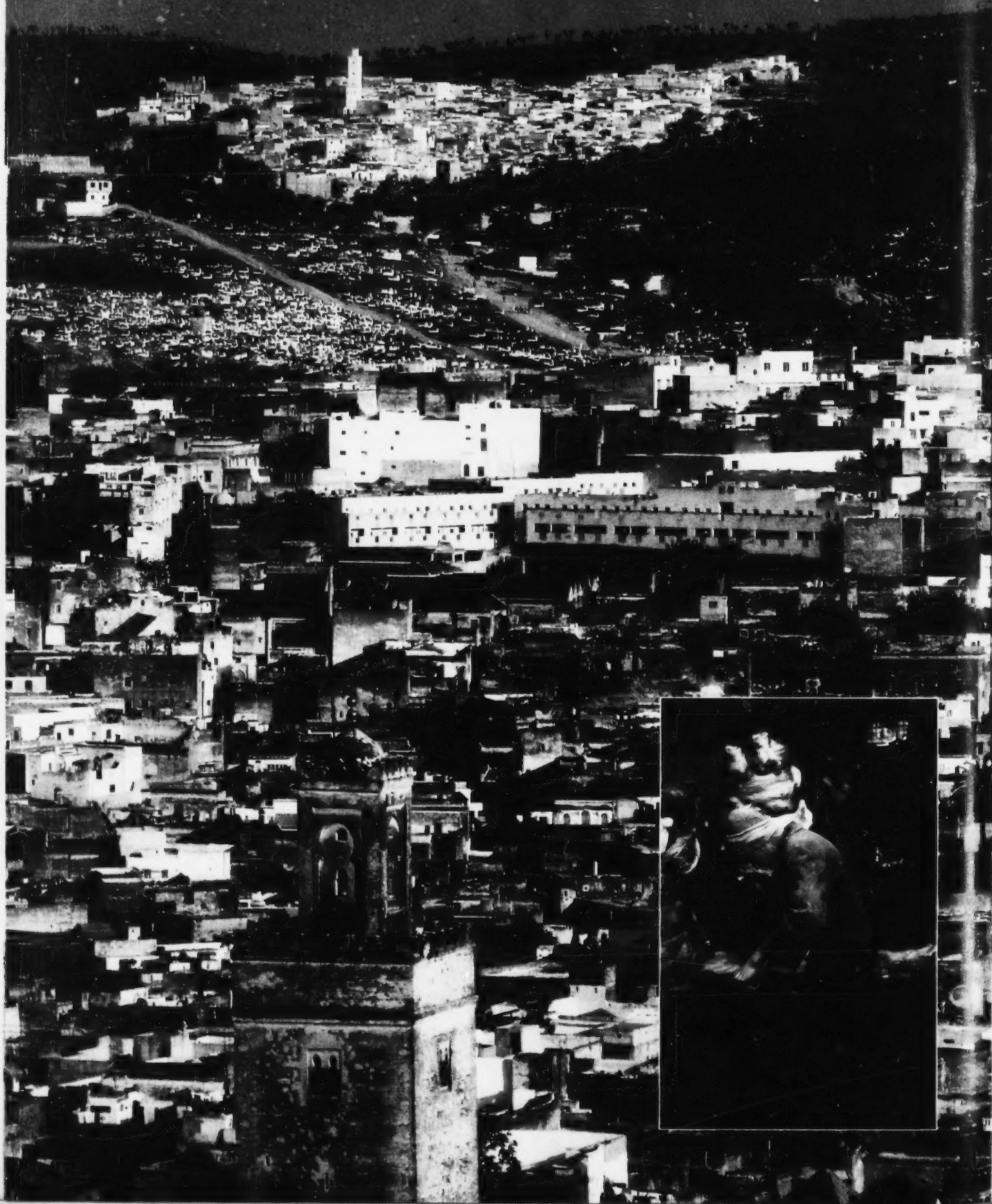
It is this fabric — close-knit neighbourhoods, bustling marketplaces, centres of learning and worship, and the interactions they foster — that has made historic cities attractive for centuries, and makes them viable for the future. Says Abdelmajid El-Kohen, mayor of the Medina, the ancient inner city of Fez: "The Medina has been able to sustain itself for 1,200 years, and is still an active environment where, despite the overcrowding, people choose to live."

In the face of unrelenting pressures, the challenge now will be to retain this human scale, and give new attention to the historic city as a place where past and future meet. — **Lois Jensen**

ALGIERS ♦ M'ZAB VALLEY, GHARDAIA ♦
POTOSI ♦ SUCRE ♦ BRASILIA ♦ OLINDA
♦ OURO PRÊTO ♦ SALVADOR DE BAHIA ♦
NESSEBAR ♦ QUEBEC ♦ CARTAGENA ♦
DUBROVNIK ♦ SPLIT ♦ HAVANA ♦
TRINIDAD ♦ CESKY KRUMLOV ♦ PRAGUE
♦ TELC ♦ SANTO DOMINGO ♦ QUITO ♦
CAIRO ♦ RAUMA ♦ MONT-SAINT-
MICHEL ♦ PARIS ♦ STRASBOURG ♦
LUBECK ♦ RHODES ♦ LA ANTIGUA
GUATEMALA ♦ VATICAN CITY ♦ BUDAPEST
♦ FLORENCE ♦ ROME ♦ SAN GIMIGNANO ♦
VENICE ♦ JERUSALEM ♦ GHADAMES ♦
DJENNÉ ♦ TIMBUKTU ♦ VALLETTA ♦ FEZ ♦
MARRAKECH ♦ GUANAJUATO ♦ MEXICO
CITY ♦ MORELLA ♦ OAXACA ♦ PUEBLA ♦
MOZAMBIQUE ISLAND ♦ KATHMANDU
♦ BERGEN ♦ ROROS ♦ LIMA ♦ CUSCO ♦
KRAKOW ♦ WARSAW ♦ ZAMOSC ♦
ANGRA DO HEROISMO ♦ EVORA ♦
ST. PETERSBURG ♦ GORÉE ISLAND, DAKAR
♦ AVILA ♦ CACERES ♦ SANTIAGO DE
COMPOSTELA ♦ SALAMANCA ♦ SEGOVIA ♦
TOLEDO ♦ GALLE ♦ KANDY ♦ ALEP ♦ BOSRA
♦ DAMAS ♦ BERN ♦ KAIROUAN ♦ SOUSSE
♦ TUNIS ♦ ISTANBUL ♦ BATH ♦ SAN JUAN
♦ KHIVA ♦ SANA'A ♦ SHIBAM ♦ KOTOR

Left to right: Havana / Black Star, Havana / Black Star, Salvador de Bahia / Black Star, Kathmandu / Panos Pictures, Santo Domingo / Panos Pictures, Lima / UNDP





C L O S E - U P : F E Z

By Geraldine Sartin

Fez, Morocco — In Fez's fabled Medina, the historic centre dating back 1,200 years, overcrowding and structural decay are casting a shadow over the future. "Do you see those beams?" asks 60-year-old Fatimah Jedid. "Some of them fell down last week and I had to fill the gaps with plaster. Now this wall is threatening to crumble as well."

Ms. Jedid is one of thousands of people who drifted into Fez from the countryside and now lives with her daughter in the ancient city, which is still surrounded by tall, sand-coloured walls. For Ms. Jedid — and the seven families who share this run-down 15th century home — just keeping the former mansion upright is a daily struggle.

Ms. Jedid's plight is typical of many in the overpopulated Medina. The wali or principal governor of Fez, M'Hammed Dryef, says migration from rural areas has been a problem for some time. Crowded and run-down housing is just one of the more visible results.

"For 12 centuries there was nothing more to Fez than the Medina," says Mohammed Ameer, a geographer and urbanist at Fez University. "The new town grew after 1916, when the Europeans built their villas outside the old city walls." At the time, he says, Morocco began trading more with Europe and so the capital was moved from inland Fez to coastal Rabat. Consequently, wealthier merchants who had always lived in the Medina left for the new capital and for other cities on the coast.

Fez had lost its merchant class but its craftsmen remained. Soon the Medina was filled with poor rural migrants who came in search of work. By the 1950s,



Sean Sprague / Panos Pictures

Entry into the Medina.

whatever middle-class was left had relocated to the Ain Kadous district, outside the Medina's northern walls.

Today, the city has two main zones. The core is the historic Medina. Surrounding it is the modern town, comprised of the administrative centre with its former French colonial villas and official buildings, and a middle-class residential area.

In many ways, the Medina, with its traditional artisans still producing their famous brass, leather and ceramic work, has remained the same for centuries. Historic architectural structures still stand, including houses with hidden courtyards and roof terraces. The Medina was originally designed for 100,000 people, but now houses close to three times that number, according to Hakima Elhaite-Idrissi, an environment expert with the government's Fez Urban Development Agency.

Sewage and water systems, Ms. Idrissi adds, cannot cope. "The Medina has its origins in the 8th century," she says. "It was built on the banks of a fast-flowing river, the Oued Fez, which supplied the drinking water, and then fed into the Oued Sebou, which carried away used water and sewage." The people lived upstream, avoiding the polluted water of the tanning and brass workshops that were built downstream.

But this ancient arrangement is no longer respected. The city still relies on the original water supplies, but workshops have begun operating upstream from the residential area, and tanners

contaminate the water by pouring chemical waste into the river. "And people are drinking it," Ms. Idrissi says.

Traces of chrome, a toxic substance that has replaced the organic materials formerly used in tanning leather, can be seen along the banks of the cement-grey river, which winds through the heart of the Medina. In the many workshops here, silvery chrome dust sparkles on the earthen floors, and is spread on stacks of pungent-smelling sheepskins. A gentle breeze can carry a cloud of chrome dust into the water; some 350 kilograms of chrome are said to end up on the banks of the Oued Fez each day.

With help from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), authorities are tackling hazardous pollution and are seeking solutions to the overcrowding and deterioration of the ancient Medina. Over the years, international attention has been drawn to Fez, due in part to its enormous cultural significance.

At its height in the Middle Ages, Fez was one of the most important trading, cultural and religious centres in the world. It is also the site of the oldest university, which has its origins in the Karaouiyine Mosque, says Mohammed Mezzine, dean of the Department of Literature at Fez University. "Since the 8th century, that mosque has been as important to the

Left: Old Fez. Inset: Local artisans dye thread for embroidered cloth as they have done for centuries.

Muslim world as the Vatican has been to the Christian world," he says. Over time, Fez attracted prominent historians, mathematicians, linguists and scientists. Even the celebrated Jewish philosopher Maimonides lived and studied here.

The many layers of the city's history can be traced through its splendid architecture, reflecting 11 centuries of wealth and power and leading to the designation of the Medina as a World Heritage Site in 1976.

No other place in northern Africa is graced with as many richly-ornamented *medersas*, or places of study, which were built next to marble and cedar-wood engraved mosques with green tile roofs. In many of the Medina's one-metre wide streets, which bustle with people and pack mules, are fountains decorated with blue, orange, yellow and white mosaics.

Any development plans for Fez must reconcile both its cultural heritage and the modern problems that face its citizens today. "There are over 10,000 important historic sites in the Medina that are part of everyday life in Fez," says Ali Amahane of the Ministry of Culture in Rabat. "The idea is not to turn the city into a museum."

In 1991, the Fez Urban Development Agency instituted a wide-ranging directive for urban projects that places the Medina within the broader development context of the modern town. Officials say preserving the glories of the old city is not only a self-evident good, but the only way that Fez as a whole – or "Grand Fez" as it is known – can develop as a thriving metropolis.

Roads have been built in the modern city and the newly created industrial zones; two large parks have been designed; water reservoirs have been constructed for the suburbs; and sewage and electricity networks have been extended to the poorer areas. "Two years ago the suburbs had no water or electricity. Now 95 per cent of households there have electricity and 85 per cent have water,"

says Abdelattif Berrada, director general of RADEEF, the Fez Water and Electricity Department. "Over the next 10 years these schemes should replace the Medina's entire sewage, water and electricity network," he says.

At the request of the Moroccan government, UNDP funded a group of architects, planners, sociologists, economists and engineers to come up with a comprehensive strategy to rehabilitate a section of the Medina. The five-year plan, which was finalized last February, recommends a series of actions relating to housing, transport, environmental pollution, economic activities, restoration and preservation, and is budgeted at \$64 million. The plan also suggests ways that existing institutions could best manage these actions.

More recently, UNDP was asked to help develop a strategy to finance the proposed programme and ensure its economic sustainability. "The idea is not to 'sell' the safeguarding of Fez," says UNDP's Sylvio Mutal, who helped to launch and coordinate the project, "but to work out mechanisms by which the local population – together with the public and private sectors – would be encouraged to invest in it."

The plan has already attracted the interest of the Italian and Japanese governments and the European Community. Locally, the Association for the Safeguarding of Fez Sais has been established, and projects have been targeted for funding from private sources.

In some respects the plan's success will be determined by the city's ability to control the influx of migrants into the Medina. Moreover, existing workshops will have to clean up their operations – or move out.

"As many as 900 of the traditional craftsmen, including some tanners and brass workers, may have to relocate outside the Medina's walls, in Ain Nkobi, because of the impact they are having on the environment," says Miloud Glibi, director of Fez's Urban Development Agency.

Deciding who stays and who goes, however, will be the tricky part. "The UNDP study recommends that only those whose activities are not in keeping with the character of the Medina, or that are especially polluting, should have to move. But in practice that will be difficult," warns Ms. Idrissi. "We will need to look at how moving some workshops will affect the traditional activities of the Medina, and what the end result will be."

Others point out that the authorities may have to provide financial inducements to encourage people to move. Says one craftsman: "They will have to help us financially if they want us to go to Ain Nkobi. The minimum we will need is a 10-year loan in order to set up our new homes and workshops there."

Local authorities are more than aware of the financial obstacles they face in making Fez a more livable place. "We started work as best we could," says Abdelmajid El-Kohen, mayor of the Medina of Fez. "But we are counting on help from the international community."

Whether the work goes on – and whether Fez can thrive for another century or more – will also depend on the residents of Fez themselves. ■

French journalist Geraldine Sartin is based in Paris.

C L O S E - U P :

By Mary Speck

Cartagena, Colombia — The ancient stone walls still loom above the wharfs, a centuries-old bulwark against the English buccaneers who once plundered cities up and down the Spanish main. Today yachts and fishing boats ply the harbour. And the only bandits who scale the ramparts are pickpockets preying on unwary tourists and surreptitious sweethearts stealing kisses beneath the battlements.

But Cartagena de Indias is again under siege from outsiders lured by its wealth and beauty. The 460-year-old Caribbean port is one of the fastest-growing cities in Colombia, a magnet for tourists seeking sun and surf, industries needing access to its harbour and impoverished immigrants hunting for work.

A city which 20 years ago had a population of 312,000 now has an estimated 700,000 inhabitants. By the year 2010, if growth rates continue, city planners expect the population to have swollen to more than one million.

And those figures do not count the tourists and temporary residents who flood Cartagena during the Christmas season and Holy Week, clogging the streets with traffic, straining the water supply and overloading the city's antiquated sewage system.

"Cartagena is now 'in,'" Moises Alvarez says sadly from his tiny windowless office in the centuries-old Palace of the Inquisition where he manages the municipality's historical archives. "We're faced with an avalanche of newcomers. The city is slipping out of our hands."

It is a concern shared by other city officials, who view Cartagena's rapid growth with a mixture of hope and apprehension. "The possibilities for tourism here are almost limitless — and we're just beginning to exploit them," says Mayor Gabriel Antonio Garcia Romero, outlining plans ranging from five-star luxury hotels to "ecological" tourism on as yet undeveloped off-shore islands

"But the key is careful planning," he adds. "We can't repeat the mistakes of the past."

Timothy Ross / UNDP



The historic downtown district.

Cartagena's old town is today a booming tropical emporium. Honking cars inch along winding narrow streets and pedestrians dart in and out of tiny shops or government offices. But amidst the bustle much of the austere colonial city remains. The Palace of the Inquisition, now a museum, dominates one side of the shady Plaza Bolivar with its elaborately carved stone portal and heavy brass-studded doors. Across the way stands the 16th century cathedral, its massive stone walls topped by a delicate bell tower rebuilt in Italian Renaissance style after the original was destroyed in one of Sir Francis Drake's attacks.

The arcades of the Plaza de la Aduana — where colonial authorities collected customs — now house city hall. And tourists shop for handicrafts in Las Bovedas, the vaults along Cartagena's cannon-proof outer walls that once sheltered troops and stored ammunition.

At night when most of the tourists, shoppers and bureaucrats depart, the old city becomes a tranquil Caribbean barrio where doors are left open and neighbours gather in tiny plazas for a chat or a game of chess.

In 1984 Cartagena was declared a World Heritage Site for its port, fortress and unique collection of monuments in its historic downtown district. The declaration, it was hoped, would spur preservation of the city's crumbling colonial churches and save high-ceilinging mansions from subdivision into squalid tenements.

The appeal worked, in a way. Rich Colombians and foreigners flocked to the

city, buying up much of its colonial patrimony at high-roller prices.

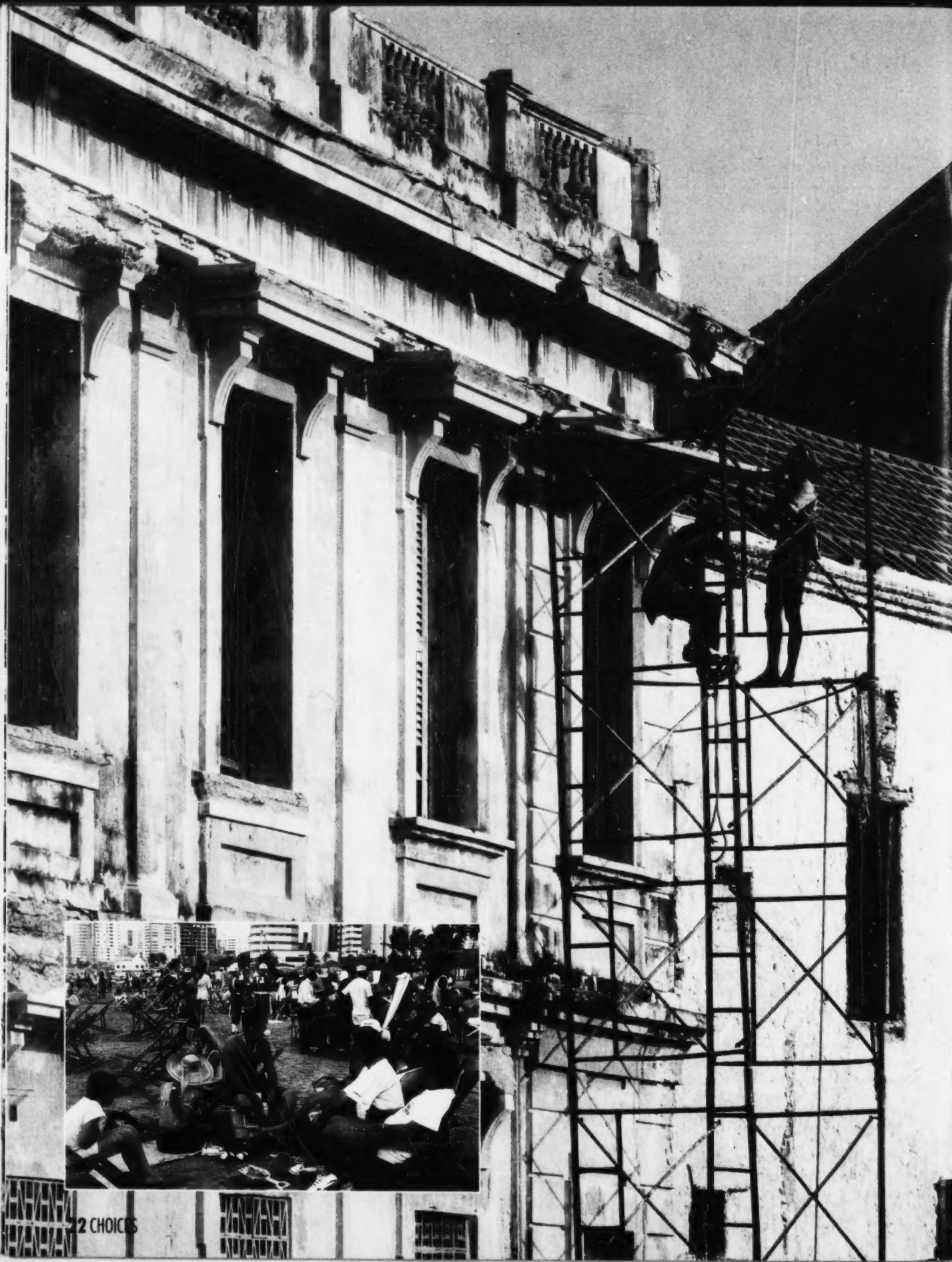
A modest colonial home — typically one or two storeys surrounding an interior patio — that went for the equivalent of about US\$50,000 just five years ago may now fetch upwards of \$200,000.

The municipal government was unable to control the sudden influx of investors. Regulations were needed to make sure colonial homes were restored, not ruined by reconstruction.

And while the rich moved into Cartagena's historic downtown, most of the rest of the city remained stuck in poverty without jobs or adequate public services.

Local officials now face challenges that

CARTAGENA



2 CHOICES

would tax even the most experienced city planners: saving Cartagena's colonial heritage and at the same time improving the lives of a rapidly growing population living both within and without the ancient walls.

With the help of UNDP, the city government is for the first time addressing problems that had been allowed to fester for decades.

Engineers, funded by the Japanese, are working to revamp and expand the colonial city's aging infrastructure. UN-financed architects are helping to strengthen building and restoration codes.

Environmental experts are advising on ways to clean up the harbour and protect the delicate Caribbean coastline. Sanitation specialists have helped elaborate projects to treat sewage that is now spewed directly into a vast mangrove swamp northeast of the city's centre.

"One of our most important contributions in Cartagena has been help in creating new environmental legislation where none existed," says Arthur Hein-Caceres, the UNDP resident representative, "and in building the local awareness needed to ensure that such laws are enforced."

But preservation of historic and natural resources is not the city's only concern. Not far from the tourist traps are thousands of clapboard shacks built by job-seekers from the provinces. An estimated 40 per cent of the city's population lives in absolute poverty.

Five years ago Zarabanda — a neighbourhood named by residents after a popular soap opera — was swampland. Today it consists of some 100 families living in makeshift homes, with makeshift services. Electricity is pinched from existing power lines. Water is channelled through hoses from the municipal aqueduct. Latrines dug by the residents themselves periodically overflow in heavy rains.

Mayor Garcia says his main concern is finding ways to expand employment — for

current residents as well as new arrivals — in addition to providing them with the education and health care they need to be productive workers.

To help the municipal government reach its goal, UNDP this year is adding consultants in the fields of education, health and job creation.

Despite its problems, Cartagena's economic future is probably brighter than that of many Colombian cities. A thriving industrial zone has sprung up around the city's oil refinery. Its ports now handle more cargo than rivals Barranquilla and Buenaventura.

One hundred years ago few would have predicted Cartagena's resurgence. When Gran Colombia — soon to split into Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador — gained independence from Spain in the early 19th century, Cartagena lost its status as an imperial port. Civil wars wrecked the hinterland. The city's population was ravaged by cholera epidemics. And commerce moved to Barranquilla from which newfangled steamboats could ply the Magdalena River into Colombia's interior.

The once prosperous city saw its population dwindle from 25,000 at the end of the 18th century to about 15,000 fifty years later. But Cartagena's decline probably saved the old walled city from destruction. When the city began to recover in the 1910s and 1920s, its elite abandoned their crumbling colonial homes for art deco mansions set on spacious, shady lots on the adjoining island of Manga. When tourism took off in the 1960s and 1970s, investors chose to build beach front high-rise hotels on Bocagrande Peninsula.

Today Bocagrande is a cautionary tale for city planners. Construction of hotels and apartment buildings has expanded faster than the local government's ability to expand services. During peak season traffic slows to a crawl as tourists search futilely for parking spaces on main streets crammed with fast-food joints and souvenir shops.

Last December the inflow of tourists overwhelmed the sewage system, backing sludge out into Bocagrande streets. The crisis forced the release of central govern-

ment funds for an emergency plan to improve and expand public services. And the Supreme Court last March ordered a halt on new construction in the area after permanent residents filed suit.

The rapid, chaotic growth of Bocagrande is blamed both on poor planning and corruption. City officials confess in private that wealthy developers can easily bypass rules or get them changed by greasing the palms of politicians and inspectors.

Now the construction craze is finally hitting Cartagena's old colonial downtown. Local officials and businessmen swear the mistakes of Bocagrande will not be repeated.

"There's too much at stake in the old city," says Jose Henrique Rizo, president of Cartagena's Chamber of Commerce. "It's part of our country's heritage. We know that if it is damaged, it can never be repaired."

The restoration of centuries-old mansions is being carefully monitored by the city's small team of inspectors to make sure modernization does not destroy the colonial architecture that makes Cartagena one of the Caribbean's most beautiful cities.

But some changes are inevitable. Native inhabitants are moving out. Fewer old timers are chatting in rocking chairs behind open doorways. Shabby cantinas are being replaced by chic cafes, filled with foreign tourists.

Even businessmen who welcome the old city's new-found prosperity feel a trace of nostalgia.

"It's positive in that properties that were deteriorating are being rehabilitated," says Mr. Rizo. "But it's sad in that we may be losing some of the character that made us unique."

Still Mr. Rizo believes the future is bright. "This city has survived so much change," he says. "I'm optimistic. Cartagena's potential is enormous. And we're just beginning to realize it." ■

Mary Speck is a correspondent for the Miami Herald in Colombia.

Left: Refurbishing facades in the old city. Inset: Tourism in Cartagena has been a mixed blessing.



CLOSE-UP: SANA'A

By I. Rajeswary

Sana'a, Republic of Yemen — The old walled city of Sana'a leaves a lasting impression on any visitor. Its 6,000 mud-brick structures — some of which soar to nine storeys — are the forerunners of today's modern skyscrapers. Unlike the facades of most 20th century buildings, these are adorned with intricate white-wash designs and round or half-circle windows inlaid with alabaster or bright coloured glass.

Bahman Kia



The market, or *suq*, is a main economic centre.

At night, when darkness descends upon the city's cavernous alleys and rubble-strewn streets, Sana'a is a breathtaking kaleidoscope of luminous reds, greens, blues and ambers. It is no wonder that the Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini chose this fairyland-like setting for his film, *Arabian Nights*.

Sana'a is more than 1,000 years old, but it still reverberates with life: its architectural treasures are not useless relics, but homes for many of the city's 45,000 inhabitants. Many structures also serve as hotels, restaurants, offices and shops.

In 1984, the walled city was designated a World Heritage Site and its preservation became both a national and international goal. The same year, a campaign to safeguard it was officially launched by the Government of Yemen, with the support of UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Since that time, more than US\$20 million has been raised from 12 donors, including France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Netherlands and Switzerland. While it is a significant start, more funds are needed to complete the work.

"If nothing had been done, the fragile city would by now be in danger of collapse," says Jerzy Szeremeta, former UNDP deputy resident representative of what was then North Yemen.

The challenge is to rehabilitate the city's crumbling architecture and introduce modern amenities, while maintaining its character and traditional economic activities. "The old city of Sana'a is very much alive," adds Mr. Szeremeta. "The *suq* or market is a mecca for small entrepreneurs and traders, and remains an important economic centre. At the same time," he adds, "we felt it was important to ensure the survival of the cultural and historical dimensions of the city because they provide continuity with the past."

For more than 200 years prior to 1962, the former North Yemen was ruled by autocratic *imams*, who, while isolating the country from foreign influence, also preserved the bustling medieval city and its traditional social structure. A civil war in 1962 overthrew the *imams*, opening the country to the outside world and to rapid economic and social changes.

By the late 1970s the population of Sana'a had swelled from 55,000 to 430,000, and was spilling out over the confines of its walls. Around the old city a new one began to grow with such 20th century conveniences as piped water, electricity, air-conditioning and telephones. Residents of the old city naturally wanted some of the same.

"Suddenly, electric wires and telephone cables started appearing, draped across buildings and suspended from leaning poles at street corners," says Abdulrahman Al-Haddad, chairman of the General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen. "Television aerials began sprouting from rooftops."

Sana'anis in the old city also wanted running water. So they laid pipes under the roads to channel water to their homes. "But the pipes were made of cheap plastic and were often too close to the surface," says Mr. Al-Haddad. "As the volume of traffic entering the city increased, the pressure exerted on the pipes forced many of them to burst and water to seep into the ground."

To make matters worse, the city had no drainage facilities or proper sewerage. The water from the broken pipes, along with the vast quantities that were draining from homes, undermined the foundations of many buildings, causing deep cracks. The water was also polluted with human and animal waste, posing a health hazard to residents, especially children who played on the streets.

The condition of the roads themselves was appalling. The stone-laid pavements had disappeared through years of neglect.

Left: The architectural treasures of Sana'a. Inset: Metal workers practise their trade in the city's market.

During the rainy season, many of the streets were impassable because of mud and flowing water. Non-biodegradable plastic bags and empty mineral water bottles were strewn about the city. Mounds of garbage and rotting litter became a haven for stray scavenging dogs.

By the mid-1980s, those who could afford to had abandoned the old city for the comfort and healthier lifestyles to be found beyond the walls.

Those who remained were often too discouraged to spend money on maintenance or repairs. Moreover, restoration was curtailed by a shortage of materials and craftsmen skilled in traditional construction techniques. "The city was in danger of ruin," says Mr. Al-Haddad, "and concerned citizens began demanding that the government do something to stop the decay."

Mr. Al-Haddad hastens to add that it was never the intention to keep Sana'a in the Dark Ages or to stifle its urban life. "But we did want to make sure that renovation was carried out in accordance with certain specifications," he says.

While financing has been a perennial problem, an even greater obstacle initially was the absence of any archeological or architectural documentation of the city; there was not even a map of old Sana'a.

With UNDP funding, UNESCO hired world-class consultants to map the walled city. They identified the most important historical monuments and put together detailed architectural drawings and technical notes so that work could begin. "It was a painstaking process that took two years to complete," Mr. Al-Haddad recalls. It resulted in a portfolio of nearly 40 investment projects that was presented to donors in 1986.

It is not surprising that the first priority was the construction of a proper sewer system. "We had to excavate the roads to lay the pipes," says Mr. Al-Haddad. "All the digging was done manually to protect the fragile foundations, most of which were fortified at the same time."

Two thirds of the sidewalks and streets were also repaved with small square stones similar to those used centuries ago. A proper drainage system was also installed, and water pipes replaced and laid deep underground, along with unsightly electric and telephone wires. Sponsors for the overhaul included Germany, the Netherlands and the Government of Yemen.

To date, 10 buildings have also been restored: six functioning hotels, two homes and two caravanserais, which UNDP helped to convert into handicraft centres. In the past, caravanserais served as both hotels and warehouses for merchants and their animals when they came to trade in the *suq*. Today, they are filled with young Yemeni men and women, who are being trained by master craftsmen to produce agate and silver jewellery, wood and leather goods, weaving and embroidery. The apprenticeship programme was also launched with UNDP support.

Today, in many parts of old Sana'a, other newly-trained craftsmen are resurfacing walls and repairing windows, perched on scaffolding that is propped up against buildings, oblivious to the indifferent vendors, gawking tourists and honking motorists below.

"It is often the rich who want to renovate their homes with no regard for tradition," complains Mr. Al-Haddad. He says his "preservation sermon" usually works. But when that fails, he enforces the building or restoration codes that were enacted into law in the early 1980s. "Needless to say I am not the most popular person in Sana'a," he adds.

Even with the might of the law on their side, conservationists face onerous challenges, not least of which is having to raise \$47 million more for ongoing and planned projects.

Among the recommendations that have yet to be enacted are long-term planning, legislation and financing mechanisms to ensure that the work already carried out in the old city can be sustained after international assistance has ended.

Despite the difficulties ahead, the crusade to preserve Sana'a is well under way,

and now in the hands of some 45 Yemeni architects, engineers, planners and administrators. Two large houses next to the famous Salah al-Din Mosque are now under repair, and will serve as a secondary school for girls. And to ensure that the streets stay clean, the government recently introduced a new system for litter removal.

A reason for optimism, Mr. Al-Haddad says, is that more and more Yemenis are realizing that they have a role to play if Sana'a is to remain a living treasure. He hopes that their numbers will increase as a new education campaign is set in motion. Encouraging as well is the fact that many former residents are returning to the old city, once known as the "Pearl of Arabia."

And while wind, rain and vandalism have destroyed much of the ancient mud wall that still encircles Sana'a, it too is being resurrected, in spite of the elements. Today, construction workers and craftsmen are labouring to put it back together — piece by piece. ■

I. Rajeswary is an information officer at UNDP in New York.

NUCLEAR WARNINGS **IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

Fears about the safety of nuclear power in the former Soviet Union have been heightened by an alarming rise in the number of reported accidents. The United Nations Development Programme, together with the International Atomic Energy Agency, have launched an initiative aimed at improving each country's ability to address radiation safety at the national, regional and global levels.

By Denise Barricklow

United Nations, New York — In the pre-dawn hours of 26 April 1986, a nuclear reactor near the city of Chernobyl erupted in a fiery volcano that rained deadly radioactive poison on surrounding farms and towns in Ukraine and Belarus, then on Poland, Scandinavia and beyond. The explosion — the worst nuclear power plant disaster in history — etched Chernobyl indelibly on the world's consciousness, a symbol of terror, anger, grief and now, foreboding.

Today, the barbed wire that encloses deserted villages and once-fertile farmland in a "forbidden zone" stretching for 32 kilometres around the sarcophagus of the ruptured Chernobyl reactor stands as a haunting testament to this still-unfolding tragedy. The human and environmental costs of the Chernobyl disaster are now becoming clearer — from rising evidence of cancer and other maladies among fall-out victims to the spiralling costs of ongoing clean-up efforts. And growing fears about the safety of nuclear power in the newly independent states of the former USSR are drawing world attention.

There are nearly 50 nuclear reactors in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Baltic States. Of these, about half are considered "very dangerous" by international experts. Some 15 reactors of the same design as the ruptured reactor at Chernobyl are still in operation — including two at the Chernobyl plant itself — and there are plans to build more, though of a modified design. And while the governments of the newly independent states recognize that their nuclear plants are unsafe, most are reluctant to shut down their reactors. Nuclear power provides up to 60 per cent of the national energy needs of some states.

Since the break up of the Soviet Union, nuclear incidents have become almost commonplace. In Russia alone, more than 200 accidents of varying types were reported last year at nuclear plants, some involving the release of radiation. More recently, an explosion on 6 April 1993 in a nuclear fuel plant near the Siberian city of Tomsk exposed fire-fighters and 1,000 square metres of surrounding land to higher-than-normal levels of radiation.

What makes these Soviet-designed reactors so dangerous is that many of them were constructed without the protective containment vessels that are standard in safer Western plants. Constructed of reinforced concrete, these containment vessels fully encase a nuclear reactor and are designed to prevent radioactive material from escaping into the atmosphere in the event of an explosion like the one that occurred at Chernobyl.

Nuclear safety concerns have been exacerbated by the fact that very few of the newly independent states have regulatory bodies in place to monitor and inspect the region's nuclear reactors or any of the other facilities that use nuclear technology, including hospitals, laboratories, mines and paper mills.

Another problem centres on the clean-up of the region's nuclear waste dumpsites. The government of the former USSR has been criticized for its environmentally-careless disposal of radioactive waste. Recently, Russian officials disclosed that the former Soviet government had dumped a number of nuclear reactors and radioactive waste products into the shallow waters of the Arctic Ocean. And the Ukrainian government will have to find ways of preventing leaching from 800 hurriedly-bulldozed containment pits filled with radioactive debris from the

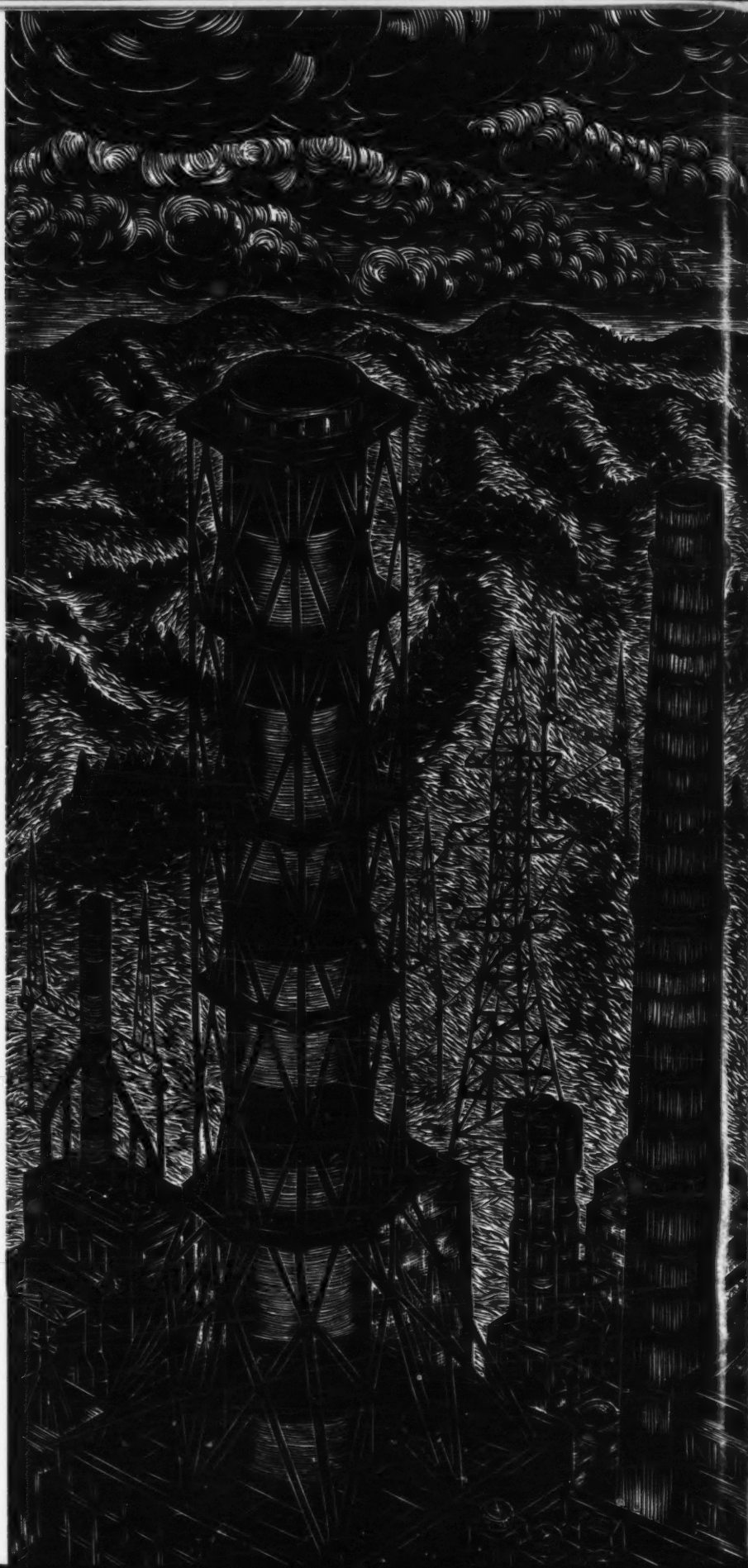
Chernobyl accident, including contaminated houses, trees and topsoil; these pits currently pose a threat to an important groundwater supply. International experts say these and other nuclear dumpsites will have to be fortified or even relocated to protect people and the environment against radiation poisoning.

Understandably, many of the governments of the newly independent states find it difficult to cope with such problems as they struggle with drastic economic reforms, inflation and the general social and political turmoil of the post-Soviet transition. Improving the safety of the nuclear industry in these countries is estimated to cost anywhere from US\$6 billion to \$50 billion — resources that none of these countries currently have.

Recognizing the gravity of the problem and its urgency, the international community has begun providing assistance for nuclear safety training and assessment. Some bilateral donors are also providing grants to build containment vessels to make existing nuclear plants safer. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), recently joined in this effort through a regional programme aimed at helping the newly independent states identify and manage safety initiatives at their nuclear power plants and other facilities that use radioactive materials.

The UNDP-IAEA programme was launched at an international forum in Vienna in May 1993, where the scope of the problems and possible initiatives were discussed. Participants included government officials from the 15 states that were part of the former Soviet Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. In addition, representatives of Eastern European countries were invited to provide examples of how radioactive safety problems similar to those in the CIS and Baltic States have been solved. Other participants included atomic energy experts,

Prevention too late: Chernobyl.



scientists, nuclear power executives and donor representatives from various countries.

This UNDP-IAEA initiative is currently helping each government assess what is needed to develop adequate national and regional institutions for radiation and nuclear safety. It will also assist the countries in building the skills needed to mobilize financial resources and to manage assistance in this field.

We spoke to Reinhart Helmke, director of UNDP's Division for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, about why it is important to address the problem of nuclear safety and what special contribution the United Nations — and UNDP in particular — can provide.

REINHART HELMKE:

Since the break up of the Soviet Union, the international community has become very concerned about the operation of the nearly 50 nuclear reactors in the region. The likelihood of a meltdown like the one that occurred at Chernobyl cannot be ruled out at any of these plants. Because of this danger, a small fraction of them have been shut down. But the consequences of these actions have often been dire.

Take Armenia, for instance, which recently closed for safety reasons a nuclear reactor that had provided about 70 per cent of the country's energy needs. Without fuel last winter for heating, people began looting buildings around the country, stealing furniture, removing doors from their hinges — all in a desperate attempt to find wood to burn so they could stay warm.

But the Armenians are not in a position to open the plant again. Given the state of the economy and the fact that there is a war going on, the government has no resources to ensure the safety of their nuclear reactor.

This is the case throughout much of the region. Only two countries — Russia and

Very few of the newly independent
states have regulatory bodies
in place to monitor and inspect
the region's nuclear reactors or any
of the other facilities that use
nuclear technology.

the Ukraine — have national nuclear regulatory bodies. And though the international community is now working to ensure the safety of the region's nuclear plants, very little is being done to monitor other industries that employ nuclear technology.

Throughout the region, a number of industries face radiation hazards. Nuclear technology is being used in mining to determine the composition of minerals, in paper mills to determine the thickness of paper, in agricultural irradiation plants to prevent potatoes from sprouting. It is also used in hospitals to treat cancer patients, and in laboratories for scientific research.

Of course, all this brings us to the problem of radioactive waste. Because there are no regulatory bodies, no one knows where the hospitals, laboratories or any of the other industries dispose of this waste. The situation is similar in the case of nuclear power plants. We know that in the past some of the waste from the reactors was improperly disposed of in the Arctic Sea. Now Norway, Finland and Sweden are very concerned about the possibility of radiation escaping from the sealed containers into the water and affecting the fishing industry, not to mention the other health hazards that could result from such leaks.

Thus far, the international community has given priority to the physical safety of the region's nuclear plants. And there is no question that this should remain a top concern. But to really ensure safety in this field, you have to go beyond just re-fitting the nuclear plants with state-of-the-art technology. This is only a short-term solution. To really improve the situation, the region must build up its capacity to safely oversee these plants and the other industries that use nuclear technology.

Right now, none of these countries have agreed on safety standards for operating these facilities. This has to take place at national, regional and international levels. To get this kind of cooperation, the United Nations needs to be involved.

I see the UN system's involvement as fourfold. First, there must be a building up of regulatory bodies. Second, the capabilities of all people who are involved in the nuclear industry must be improved, whether they are managing international assistance, working with the regulatory bodies or actually running the plants. Third, I think we need to train people who handle radioactive material. This includes doctors, paramedical staff, scientists and laboratory assistants, as well as mine workers and other industry personnel. Fourth, I think it's important to link the problem of nuclear safety to other issues, such as the environment and health care. We need to educate the people who deal with these issues, so that they can be better equipped to address these problems, and serve as watchdogs, if you will. A public awareness campaign will obviously have to be a large part of this programme.

As a first step, UNDP hosted a forum in Vienna to help each country identify its most urgent nuclear safety needs. The exercise helped create an understanding of different national concerns and priorities. In Ukraine, for example, the problem is not that there aren't enough institutions in the field. There are too many. So streamlining may turn out to be the issue there.

Before the problem of nuclear safety in the states of the former Soviet Union can be tackled in a systematic way, a better understanding of the problems and needs of each country is necessary. It is only through cooperation that such understanding can be achieved and that we can hope to come to grips with this grave international problem. ■

Denise Barricklow is a freelance journalist based in New York.

An Emerging Crisis

AIDS in Asia

By Maggie Black

New Delhi — There are growing fears that Asia will become the epicentre of the AIDS epidemic by the end of the 1990s, with upwards of one million new cases of HIV infection each year. As part of the effort to prevent this “smouldering volcano” from erupting, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has just completed the first phase of a US\$1.8 million regional project to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS in Asian and Pacific countries. The project team is working with government policy makers and planners, social and economic analysts, business people, lawyers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to find ways to reduce the human damage the HIV epidemic will surely bring. Workshops have been held in 14 countries on the development implications of AIDS, and three inter-country consultations have focused on the economic impact of the crisis, along with related legal and ethical issues.

As yet, AIDS seems beguilingly remote from the day-to-day lives of most Asian people. This is mainly because the actual caseload is still very low, even in places such as Thailand and India, two front-line countries for AIDS. But the delayed-action behaviour of the HIV virus means that the visible trail of sickness is only the tip of the iceberg. Lack of testing and diagnostic facilities also depresses the figures. In Thailand, the estimated number of HIV infections in late 1992 was between 400,000 and 600,000; in India, between 600,000 and three million.

And the rate of infection is surprisingly rapid. In Thailand, HIV infections doubled during 1990 and have since doubled or more again. The infection level is far higher than in the United Kingdom, where the size of the population is comparable and the first cases were reported



Door-to-door education: New Delhi Chamber of Commerce sponsors AIDS education in low-income communities.

Andrea Booher / UNDP

Selling health from a roadside stall

Puzhal, India — About 30 kilometres outside Madras, on the main road north into Andhra Pradesh, is a truck stop at a place called Puzhal. Here, all the heavy-duty vehicles that carry goods on this route pull in to have their papers stamped. On either side of the road a ribbon of tea stalls and rickety shops caters to the trucking trade.

One shop has been rented by SIAAP, the Southern India AIDS Action Programme, a community-based NGO headquartered in Madras. A yellow sign with black letters advertises "health for truck drivers." What it promotes is self-protective sex. Sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, are an occupational hazard for a very high proportion of South India's long-haul drivers. Many spend most of their working life on the road, away from home and wife. Around 300 kilometres along the highway from Puzhal is another ribbon settlement of crude and colourful roadside cabins which offer not only tea, music, drinks and cigarettes, but also cheap and swift sexual favour. Almost all the truck drivers regularly engage in sex with partners other than their wives.

G. Kumaresan (popularly known as Mr. Kumar), the SIAAP social worker who had the idea of setting up the truck drivers' health post, previously worked on an STD prevention outreach programme run by a Madras hospital. Originally, they had tried distributing condoms to sex workers. But it soon became clear that the women were in no position to negotiate their use. Sexual favour is offered in a competitive market and the client dictates the terms of the encounter. If a customer did not wish to use a condom, he simply went elsewhere — and the woman went hungry. This realization encouraged Mr. Kumar to direct his energies to the sex workers' clients. The approach is not only sound from a practical point of view, but also avoids the implication — too often conveyed — that sex workers are uniquely responsible for spreading HIV and other STDs, and that their clients are merely victims.

Mr. Kumar began the SIAAP initiative in October 1991 with a survey in the truck stop at Puzhal. Over 1,000 drivers and cab assistants passed through every day, of whom 90 per cent said they had suffered from an STD. They usually dealt with the problem by purchasing medicines or going to doctors whose names they passed around. Few used condoms, but all were keen to learn more about how to avoid HIV infection and STDs.

Truck drivers can be tough and aggressive. Mr. Kumar, who sometimes sees men from his own Tamil Nadu village among the haulers, is comfortable using their language and is familiar with their behaviour. But he has trod carefully, taking things step by step to avoid the antagonism any group might feel if it is seen to be specifically targeted. On more than one occasion in the early days, he feared his yellow sign would be torn down.

The SIAAP booth has an interior room with AIDS prevention posters on the walls, where nervous or curious drivers can come for a private chat. Every day, around 50 condoms are distributed to numerous customers. Some drivers have become regulars, and are beginning to tell road companions about the service. Mr. Kumar pastes stickers inside their cab windscreens — "Protect yourself against HIV" — hoping that further north, when the lights of the roadside cabins beckon, the message will be heeded.

The men's level of knowledge about HIV and how it can, and cannot, be transmitted tends to be low. Newspaper stories with misleading headlines such as "Cure for AIDS" and "Anti-AIDS drug to be manufactured in India" have conveyed false information to those who only read the first line. Many believe that a cure already exists, that it cannot be beyond the capacity of the modern doctor to get rid of HIV. For this reason, the SIAAP posters show white-coated medical doctors recommending condoms for protection.

The reason that the booth is accepted among its rough and ready customers is that it has focused on something the men

really want: control and treatment of STDs. Recently, the booth advertised that a medical team would come one evening and carry out STD testing. Over 30 customers turned up. Those with positive results were sent to the team's clinic in the city for treatment.

This modest booth with its yellow notice, its blackboard and its loud speaker, is not by itself going to make a visible dent in the HIV transmission rate. Its importance is that it has developed a new service system for HIV prevention, based on an approach acceptable to an occupational group whose behaviour places them at risk. It is for this pioneering work that the UNDP-supported regional project has taken particular notice of SIAAP's activities and is encouraging them to share their experience. The health post can be duplicated on other roads, at bus stations, in ports, and wherever the long-distance lifestyle encourages sexual straying.

SIAAP has already been asked by five NGOs in Tamil Nadu for advice on how to set up and run the same kind of health booth at other truck stops. It has also begun to link up with condom manufacturers, truck-owners, medical practitioners, and other potential partners in the private sector. In time, similar booths and services may be found along truck routes all over India, and elsewhere. — M. B.

earlier. Mechai Viravaidya, head of Thailand's Population and Development Association, believes that without an effective control programme, between two million and four million Thais will be infected by the year 2000, with 180,000 cases of AIDS.

Those apparently experiencing the most marked rates of increase — since these are the people who attract the measurers' attention — are intravenous drug users and women who trade in sex. Among intravenous drug users tested in Myanmar, HIV infection rose from an alarming 55 per cent in 1989 to 71 per cent in 1991; in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur, from 23 per cent in 1990 to 45 per cent in 1991.

But the main means of HIV transmission in the region, as in 75 per cent of cases worldwide, is by heterosexual relations. Women forced by poverty, abandonment and lack of other means of livelihood into prostitution face especially bleak prospects. Since 1984, when the first case of HIV infection was found in an Indian sex worker, one-fifth of the 100,000 to 300,000 prostitutes in the Bombay area are thought to have become infected. In Thailand, some studies show that 15 to 20 per cent of "bar girls" and "hostesses" are HIV positive.

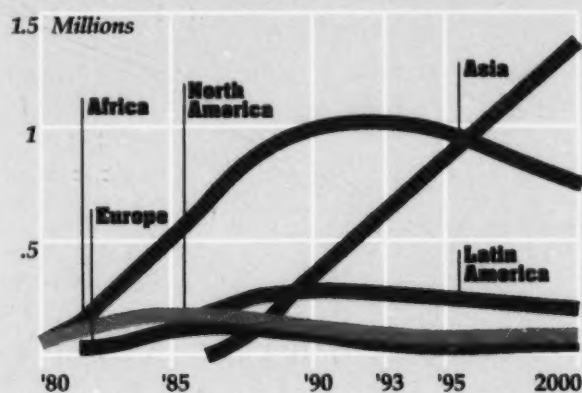
Focusing attention on specific groups contributes to the false idea that AIDS is no risk to the vast majority of people. In fact, the clients of sex workers constitute a much more insidious pool of infection. They are not easily identifiable as a group, so it is difficult to test them. Yet it is they who facilitate the onward passage of HIV. Many Thai men visit sex workers routinely; studies show that 90 per cent have done so by the age of 19.

Until recently, HIV and AIDS has been seen almost entirely as a health problem. But one of the major lessons to come out of Africa is that both the context and the consequences of AIDS are critical from a social and economic, as well as a health point of view. UNDP project officials are anxious to ensure that this lesson in all its dimensions is fully absorbed in Asia, where many countries are undergoing rapid socio-economic transition. As a consequence, extensive migration of labour between countries, and a constant flow of people from the countryside into cities in search of work, provides HIV with a larger and more porous environment in which to circulate.



HIV prevention techniques:
Indian street theatre demonstration of condom use.

Estimated/projected new adult HIV infections per year



In the big city slum, the factory or the mining colony, traditional behavioural codes and established sexual partnerships tend to break down, and sex becomes a growth industry. Tragically, it is at a time of great human flux in Asia that a virus which exploits the social characteristics of the development process has made its deadly appearance.

Resorting to commercial sex has long been associated with soldiering and seafaring, occupations which entail long periods of spouse separation. A survey of long-haul truck drivers in India found that 78 per cent had sex with women who were not their wives, and tests revealed an HIV infection rate of one per cent, far higher than the Indian average of one in around 2,000. Sex health educa-

NGOs join business in the war against AIDS

By Tomas Larsson

Bangkok — "We attract people from all segments of Thai society," says a member of a self-help group of persons who have tested positive for the HIV virus. "Bar workers, construction workers, company employees, managers, civil servants and, like myself, small-business owners."

Bangkok's Wednesday Friend's Club, formed in 1990, today counts more than 400 members, most between the ages of 20 and 40. As people from all walks of life increasingly become infected with the HIV virus, it is being recognized that class and wealth are no protection against HIV infection: the virus is striking the poorest of the poor as well as the country's budding middle class and even elite segments of society.

"In Thailand we don't have any risk groups. Everybody is at risk," says immunologist Vicharn Vithayasai. The common and culturally-entrenched behaviour of Thai men to opt for unprotected commercial sex is one of the causes behind the explosive spread of HIV to the general population. "I knew about it, but I wasn't afraid of AIDS. I was more afraid of being without sex," whispers 36-year-old Kruat, who, in the last stages of AIDS, is languishing away in a cold grey hospital ward in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai.

Infected men also risk transmitting the virus to their wives and offspring. The national average of HIV infection among pregnant women is one per cent, according to Steven Kraus, a WHO technical officer working with Thailand's Ministry of Public Health. In one hard-hit northern

province, infection rates among pregnant women has soared to over eight per cent.

At the Thai Red Cross Society's clinic for sexually-transmitted diseases in downtown Bangkok, around 1,000 persons are tested anonymously for HIV every month. An average of 10 per cent are found to be HIV positive.

Human suffering apart, HIV raises an alarming spectre for Thailand. With its well-established HIV epidemic, does Thailand, the economic success dubbed the "fifth tiger of Asia," now risk becoming the Asian Uganda of the 1990s? Maybe not. True, statistical and anecdotal evidence is alarming. However, parallel to the growth in scale and scope of the HIV challenge to Thai society, the country is beginning to mobilize an impressive multisectoral response to it.

Apart from governmental efforts, interesting and strategically significant partnerships between the private sector and NGOs are being formed in Thailand. "There is a double imperative for business to protect their workforce from AIDS," says Alan Doss, UNDP regional representative in Thailand. Apart from humanitarian concern for their employees, business owners and managers need to consider long-term profitability. Indeed, Thai businesses are starting to take action as the realization hits home that sick and dying workers, and customers, are bad for the bottom line.

Members of the Thai tourism industry were among the pioneers in working with major Thai NGOs on HIV and AIDS issues, such as the Population and Community Development Association (PDA) and

the Thai Red Cross. Dusit Thani, Thailand's largest hotel group, blitzed information to its staff in a three-day anti-AIDS campaign last year. Royal Garden Resorts has developed in-house training seminars to provide education on HIV/AIDS — a mandatory element in the orientation course that is given to all new staff — with help from PDA. Furthermore, PDA conducts special workshops four to five times a year for Royal Garden staff.

For Ed Hubennette, general manager of Royal Garden Resorts, negative press reports that sensationalized Thailand's HIV epidemic were what prompted him to begin educational efforts for his staff of 2,000.

"There were large misconceptions among employees. Now their knowledge of HIV has improved dramatically," says Mr. Hubennette, who, as a hotel manager in New York in the 1980s saw four of his staff die of AIDS. Royal Garden staff have responded positively to the concept of employer-organized education. "I think it is a good thing. I learned a lot about the disease," says doorman Nivat.

Tourism-related companies are not alone in believing that HIV/AIDS is an issue they need to be concerned about. Krating Daeng, producer of a popular "energy" drink, has distributed relevant information at sales outlets in shops and gas stations all over the country. Thai Farmers Bank has educated staff and 200 top corporate clients on HIV/AIDS. The bank is also sponsoring a PDA project to provide poor rural women in five villages in Thailand's northern Chiang Rai Province with alternative income opportunities to prevent them from entering into commercial sex.

Local offices of foreign companies have joined the effort. American International Assurance provides all its policy holders in Thailand with HIV information, and is setting up a foundation to support anti-AIDS efforts. The direct sales staff of the cosmetics company Avon is promoting HIV awareness among customers. Kodak,

The most positive response to the epidemic so far has come from non-governmental organizations.

Continued on page 35

tion and condom distribution among truck drivers are among the socially-targeted approaches setting a pattern for the future.

The UNDP-supported project is also tackling the legal and ethical climate surrounding HIV. Some public health legislation has been used to incarcerate individuals testing positive for HIV. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNDP are both firmly convinced that the law must be used not to increase stigmatization, but to support the human rights of those affected by the virus. Pressure groups have prevented the passage of laws to impose mandatory testing for those "at-risk" in both India and Thailand; but many policy makers and employers need persuading that stopping HIV requires a supportive rather than condemnatory climate.

Up to now, the potential costs of HIV to society have largely been analyzed in medical terms: the costs of testing, of clinical care for AIDS patients, of protecting the blood supply and so on. Thailand has estimated that these health system costs could grow from \$1.7 million in 1991 to \$65 million in 2000. But no attempt has yet been made by any country in the region to calculate extra burdens to society or social services caused by increased dependency ratios and the breakdown in family life, including the care of millions of parentless children.

A study for UNDP has underlined that, in Asia, costs of the epidemic will be mostly borne by affected individuals and their families. This situation contrasts with that in most Western economies, where many such costs are met by state or private insurance provisions, and where, accordingly, there is far more incentive for private business and the public sectors to invest in HIV prevention.

The most positive response to the epidemic so far has come from NGOs. They tend to work with small groups of people, making them better suited to deal with the human stress caused by the virus than large and impersonal government bodies. The work of these organizations has been supported by various UNDP initiatives and has involved information sharing, developing links

Until recently, HIV/AIDS has been seen almost entirely as a health problem.

with the business community and capacity-building. The UNDP-supported regional project has plans to give direct support to key NGO pilot projects during its next phase, which is beginning this year.

The overwhelming need for, and effectiveness of, community-based approaches is being demonstrated in countries around the world. "The most striking feature about this epidemic is that individuals and communities have been mobilized and empowered by it," said Elizabeth Reid, director of UNDP's HIV and development programme, at an international congress on AIDS in New Delhi last November. "Focus should be placed not only on technologies (condoms, test kits, etc.) and on interventions (education campaigns, STD services, for example), but on the initiation of processes through which individuals and communities can change and through which agents of change are created. Placing people and their communities at the centre of the epidemic is one of the main challenges we face." ■

Maggie Black is a development journalist living in Oxford, England.

3M and Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising have all donated either products or creative services to produce HIV/AIDS information materials. Robinson's Department Store has included HIV/AIDS education in a human resources programme to promote healthy lifestyles among its staff.

Building on these unusual partnerships, a consultation sponsored by the UNDP-supported regional project, involving 10 Asian and Pacific countries, was held in Hua Hin, Thailand in 1992. It was the first time ever that representatives of business and NGOs met formally to discuss ways in which they could cooperate in HIV prevention.

Theoretically, there are good reasons why such partnerships should exist: to teach their staff about HIV, businesses need the expertise of NGOs; and NGOs badly need the financial, material and creative resources available in the private sector. And through business, NGOs can reach a huge pool of Thai workers (and, in some cases, customers) with HIV education. "It's a perfect blend," says WHO's Steven Kraus.

Some realized the potential early on. For example, PDA's effort to develop links with the business community started in 1989 with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

On the other hand, it has also been observed that many NGOs are used to dealing with businesses as potential philanthropists rather than as clients or partners; as a result, they may lack the ability and confidence to reach out as equal partners in a joint project. Strengthening NGO capabilities has therefore become a



Loite Jensen / UNDP

key concern in UNDP's AIDS-related work in the Asia-Pacific region. Its workshops and resource materials have assisted in bridging the cultural gap between business and NGOs, by helping NGOs develop the professional skills needed to work successfully with the private sector.

"NGOs have found the business sector far more receptive than they expected," says Joyce Lyons, who heads the regional UNDP project. Apart from Thailand, business and NGOs are forming partnerships in Pakistan, India, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. Says Ms. Lyons: "The culture gap is being bridged nicely."

In Thailand particularly, private sector initiatives to fight HIV are multiplying rapidly. The expected increase in demand from the Thai business community for advice and information on HIV/AIDS-related issues has prompted PDA and the Thai Red Cross Society to begin a joint project that will address these needs.

Late last year, the Bangkok-based American Chamber of Commerce adopted a position paper on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce recently published a HIV/AIDS handbook for Japanese managers in Thailand, which includes a list of NGOs and other institutions that can provide information and educational resources.

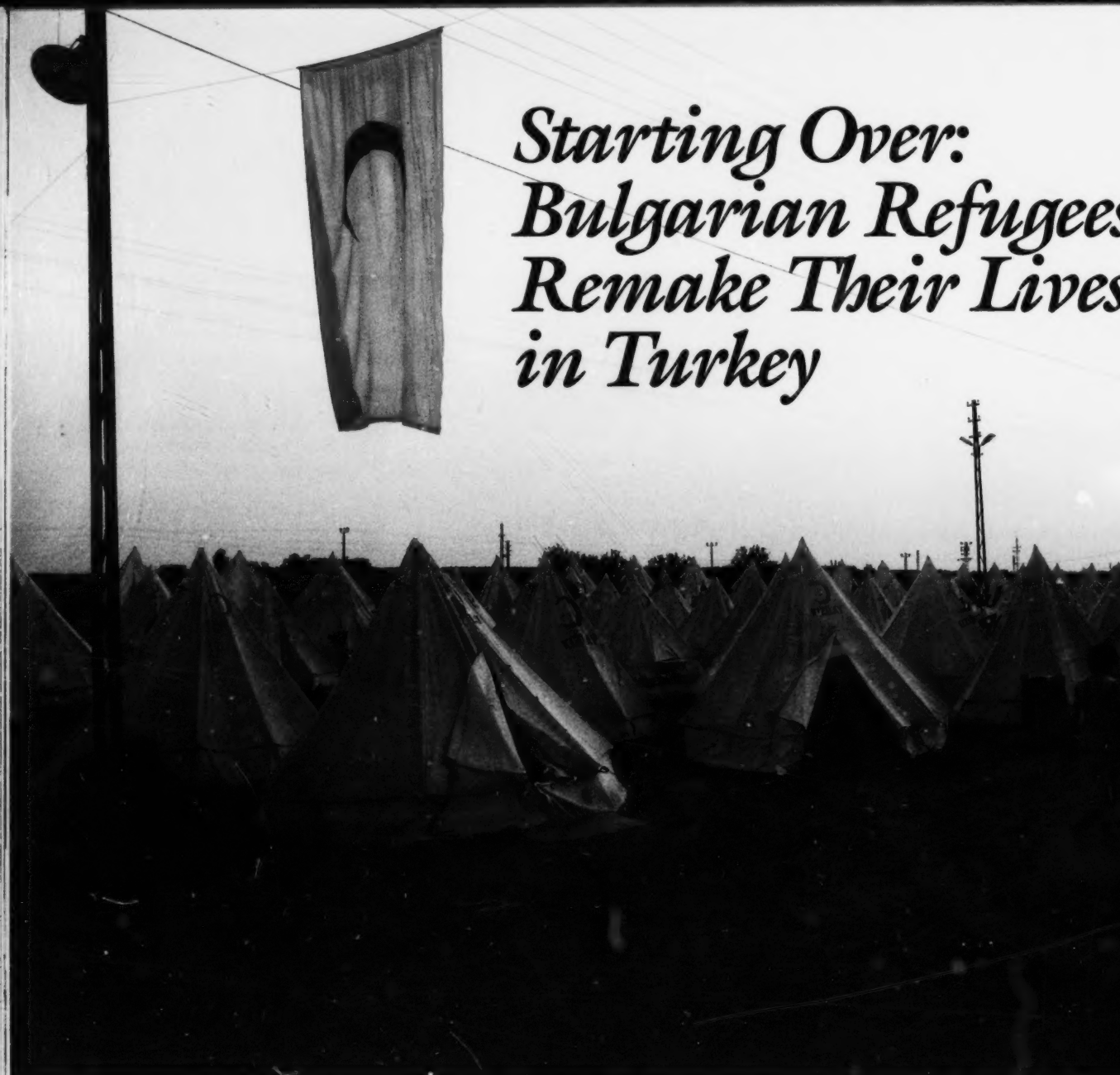
In what could prove to be a significant next step, a business coalition on HIV/

Sexual behaviour surveys: Red Cross worker in Thailand administers questionnaire.

AIDS in Thailand is about to be formed to further heighten corporate awareness of the disease. It may serve as a blueprint for other countries in the region.

Despite these encouraging signs, there is still a long way to go in overcoming negative attitudes towards persons with HIV: pre-employment screening and other discriminatory practices are becoming increasingly common. There are even cases of HIV-positive employees being fired from their jobs, says Niphop Chonsawat, secretary of the Wednesday Friend's Club. "Thai society still does not accept HIV-positive people, but we hope to raise the acceptance level through information in factories, schools and other institutions. Human rights are a primary concern." ■

Swedish journalist Tomas Larsson is based in Bangkok.



Starting Over: Bulgarian Refugees Remake Their Lives in Turkey

By Mary Lynn Hanley

Istanbul — At first glance there is nothing especially striking about Ismael Bayraktar's tailoring shop. It occupies the lower level of a simple cement block building, along a muddy road on the outskirts of Istanbul. Sewing machines hum as a handful of women and men cut patterns from bolts of cloth and stitch together lengths of fabric, warmed by the glow of an electric heater. Hanging on the walls are the products of the group's labour — children's dresses, women's

blouses, modern black stretch pants with stirrups.

But there is more to this simple shop than meets the eye. Behind it lies a tale of a people's courage, perseverance and determination to preserve their identity and way of life — and of the effective action on the part of Turkey, the United States and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that has enabled them to do so.

In the summer of 1989, when Mr. Bayraktar arrived in Turkey with his family and one battered sewing machine, he



Exodus from Bulgaria.

one million. Harsh decrees ordering the closure of Turkish schools and the banning of the Turkish language threatened to extinguish the last remnant of their cultural heritage. The final straw, which unleashed waves of protest and

Saral / Sipa Press

ultimately led to mass migration and expulsion, was the attempt to force ethnic Turks to take Bulgarian names.

"I was the supervisor of a team of tailors," Mr. Bayraktar recalls. "We refused to accept the names and identity cards given to us. I didn't even let them take down my Turkish nameplate hanging in my office." Because he would not comply, the tailor was placed under house arrest for two months and then taken to a detention camp.

"Living conditions were extremely harsh," he says. "During cold months they kept us in freezing cells for 15 to 20 days at a time." After three and a half years, Mr. Bayraktar finally succeeded in obtaining permission to leave Bulgaria. "I cut the legs off my sewing machine and carried it with me like a suitcase in order to practise my craft and not go hungry," he recalls.

Moved by the plight of its ethnic cousins, Turkey opened its borders to the new arrivals. But it was immediately faced with the problem of finding food, shelter, employment and other essentials for a huge mass of people who shared common roots but, having been raised under Communism, understood little about the workings of a free market economy. While 100,000 of the Bulgarian ethnic Turks returned to Bulgaria after the change of government in that country in 1990, 220,000 decided to settle in Turkey permanently.

"Our challenge was to help the refugees find jobs so that they could quickly become self-supporting," says Ibrahim Akcayogiu, assistant coordinator of an employment project for the refugees organized by the Turkish government and UNDP. Emergency food and shelter were initially provided by Turkey's Social As-

sistance and Solidarity Fund and the European Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Organization. Not only was this humanitarian aid a drain on the Turkish economy, it raised fears of potential opposition. "We were afraid that some people would feel it wasn't right to assist the Bulgarian refugees when there are no unemployment benefits for Turkish citizens," Mr. Akcayogiu explains.

Sixty-five per cent of the refugees — 143,000 men and women — were between the ages of 15 and 65 and thus potential members of the work force. At the same time, there was an eight per cent unemployment rate among Turkish nationals in that age group. Nearly 1.2 million were without jobs and another 200,000 were joining their ranks every year.

The sight of thousands of refugees streaming through border crossings in northwestern Turkey in the summer and fall of 1989 attracted more than compassion on the part of the international community. That November, the US government provided a grant of US\$10 million to assist them. Turkish and US authorities decided to use these funds for a vocational training and job placement project, which UNDP implemented through its Office for Project Services, in cooperation with the Turkish Employment Organization.

"This experience with vocational training and providing support to new business owners has given us a model for solving unemployment problems among Turkish citizens," says Mr. Akcayogiu. The same strategy, he adds, could be used by other countries facing unemployment problems or the task of helping large numbers of refugees become productive.

The project had three objectives: refugees who already had skills were to be placed in jobs in Turkish industries; vocational training courses with guaranteed employment were to be given to unskilled refugees; and orientation courses were to be provided on Turkey's socio-economic structure. Seventeen Turkish provinces were to be involved, with the main activities in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa and Eskisehir.

"We made the refugees aware of the



Andrew Holbrooke / Black Star

A tent city in Edirne, Turkey, August 1989: The first stop for many refugees.

would hardly have believed it possible that within four years he would be the proprietor of a thriving Istanbul business. The tailor was part of a mass exodus of 320,000 Bulgarian citizens of ethnic Turkish origin who fled to Turkey in the wake of a ruthless assimilation campaign set in motion in 1984 by the former Bulgarian regime. Intended to neutralize the influence of minorities, the "forced Bulgarianization" was particularly hard on the ethnic Turkish population, at that time estimated to number between 400,000 and

various programmes through the distribution of brochures and posters in places they frequented," says Mr. Akcayogiu. "Others heard about it through word-of-mouth." Turkish authorities decided against publicity via mass media for fear of backlash from those who might object to refugees being singled out for special treatment.

In the early days of the project, 40,000 refugees were registered with the Turkish Employment Organization, approximately half of whom were skilled and found immediate employment. The vocational training programme offered 500 courses to some 7,000 trainees who later found jobs in tourism, textiles, manufacturing, construction and services. Another 4,500 people were helped to upgrade their skills to improve job prospects in such fields as data processing, accounting, secretarial work, and radio and television repair and maintenance. Through the orientation programme, 17,000 refugees learned about the basic characteristics of their new homeland, Turkey's social structure, the legal status of migrants, working life, public services and social and economic conditions.

Some of the training was conducted in mobile training units that were introduced for the first time in Turkey. Based in Izmir and Bursa, these mini-workshops offered hands-on instruction in practical skills including metal work, wood work, plumbing, knitting, weaving and sewing.

Among the vocational trainees was Mr. Bayraktar's 20-year-old son, Mohamed, whom the former Bulgarian authorities sought to detain because he was of military age. "I smuggled him out of the country," Mr. Bayraktar says. "We put him among the goods that we covered with sacks and wrapped in blankets." Mohamed is now applying new design skills, acquired through a vocational course, to his father's business.

The programme faced a potential crisis in 1991 when Turkish businesses, reeling from the economic impact of the Gulf war, laid off up to a quarter of a million workers. Since this made placement of skilled refugees in Turkish firms all the more difficult, those who showed entrepreneurial talent were assisted in setting up their own small businesses through a self-employment programme launched by the UNDP-supported project.

Mr. Bayraktar was among thousands of



Bulgarian ethnic Turkish entrepreneurs make a flower business bloom.

refugees who benefited from the programme. It provided an average of \$560 in start-up funds to each of 750 groups of refugees, enabling them to purchase machinery, equipment and materials, or to rent or rehabilitate premises for their establishments. Most of the businesses — which included electrical repair, plumbing, beekeeping and floriculture — were family affairs. Within months, the entrepreneurs were earning more than the Turkish minimum wage and reinvesting in their enterprises. "We expect that at least 90 per cent of the new businesses will survive," says Mr. Akcayogiu.

One is Omir Asik's carpentry shop, where a two-family cooperative is using modern machinery to churn out furniture, moldings and casements for doors and windows. The business is shared by Mr. Asik's family and neighbours who also migrated from Bulgaria. "We came and

they gave us new machines that are more advanced than the ones we used in Bulgaria," he says.

Special efforts have been made to reach women refugees, who make up about a third of the total who stayed in Turkey. Many have started their own businesses.

For single mothers like 32-year-old Halime Atasoy, it took special courage to leave the land of their birth. "There was no life for us there," she recalls. "I decided to leave, come what may. We sold our belongings and had just enough to buy a car. I had my daughter and one suitcase."

Although Ms. Atasoy has a degree in metallurgy from a Bulgarian technical school, she found her first job in Turkey as a dairy-maid on a farm near Bursa in the northwest. "It was hard for me," she says, "but I was good at the job and the owner was happy with me. I am a woman who is not afraid to work." Realizing that selling milk would be more profitable, Ms.

Atasoy started a delivery route, making use of her car. And when she heard that assistance was available for willing entrepreneurs, she decided to expand her business by making and selling cheese.

The last of the refugees to receive job training were awarded graduation certificates at the project's closing ceremony in Istanbul in February. The occasion also marked the integration into Turkey of thousands of refugees who are now considered an asset to the economy. Ms. Atasoy echoes the sentiments of many: "I have to work very hard, but I am happy. My customers are pleased with my service. I want to stay in this country and continue working." ■

Mary Lynn Hanley is a contributing editor of CHOICES.

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In 1990, \$3.5 billion was spent on technical cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa — one quarter of total aid to the region. But after decades of such assistance — where outside experts were sent in to help countries train staff and strengthen institutions — observers say that technical cooperation in Africa has left much to be achieved. "Real expenditure in this area has not decreased much, tens of thousands of expatriate personnel are still present, and many institutions critical to the functioning of a modern state simply do not work very well," say the book's authors.

Rethinking Technical Cooperation assesses recent reform proposals and puts forward innovative ideas. It recommends greater cost-consciousness on the part of both donors and African governments in funding technical assistance, more attention to training and use of local personnel, and increased focus on problems of civil service disarray that prevent technical cooperation from "sticking." The book's concerns are at the heart of the development issues of the 1990s: faster economic growth and improved economic management through greater self-reliance.

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